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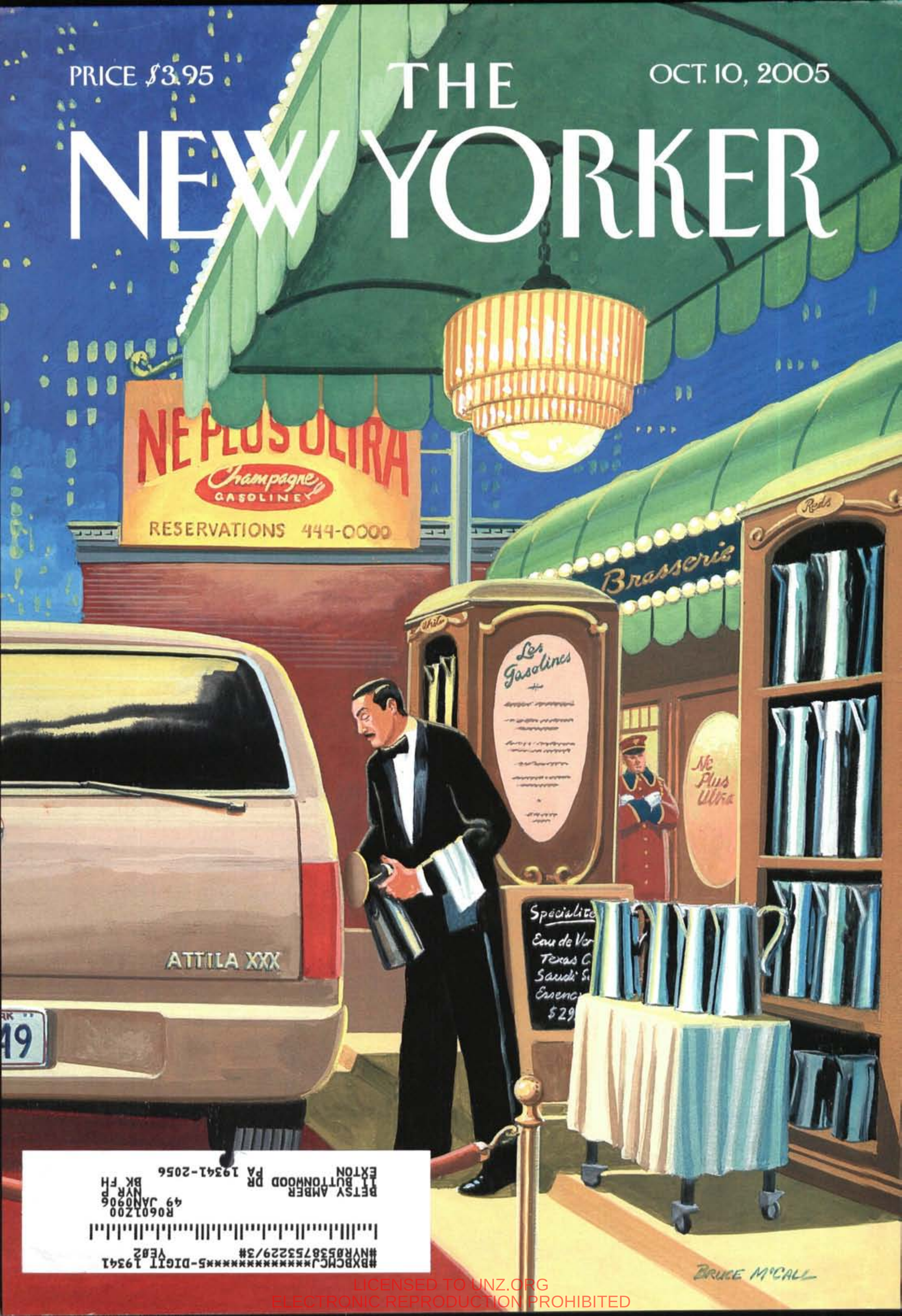
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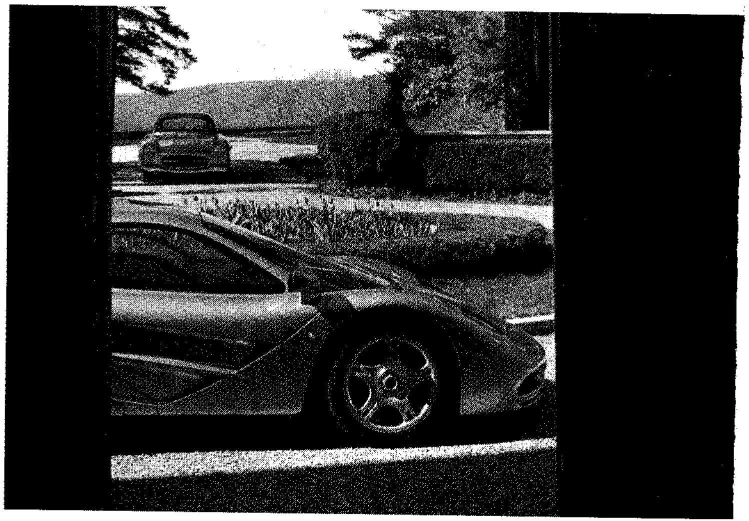

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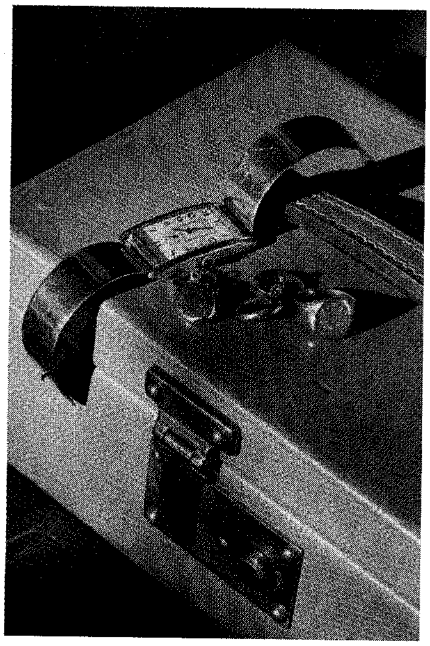

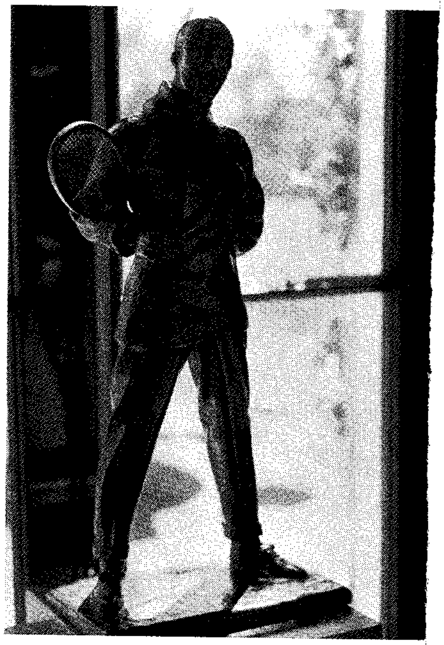

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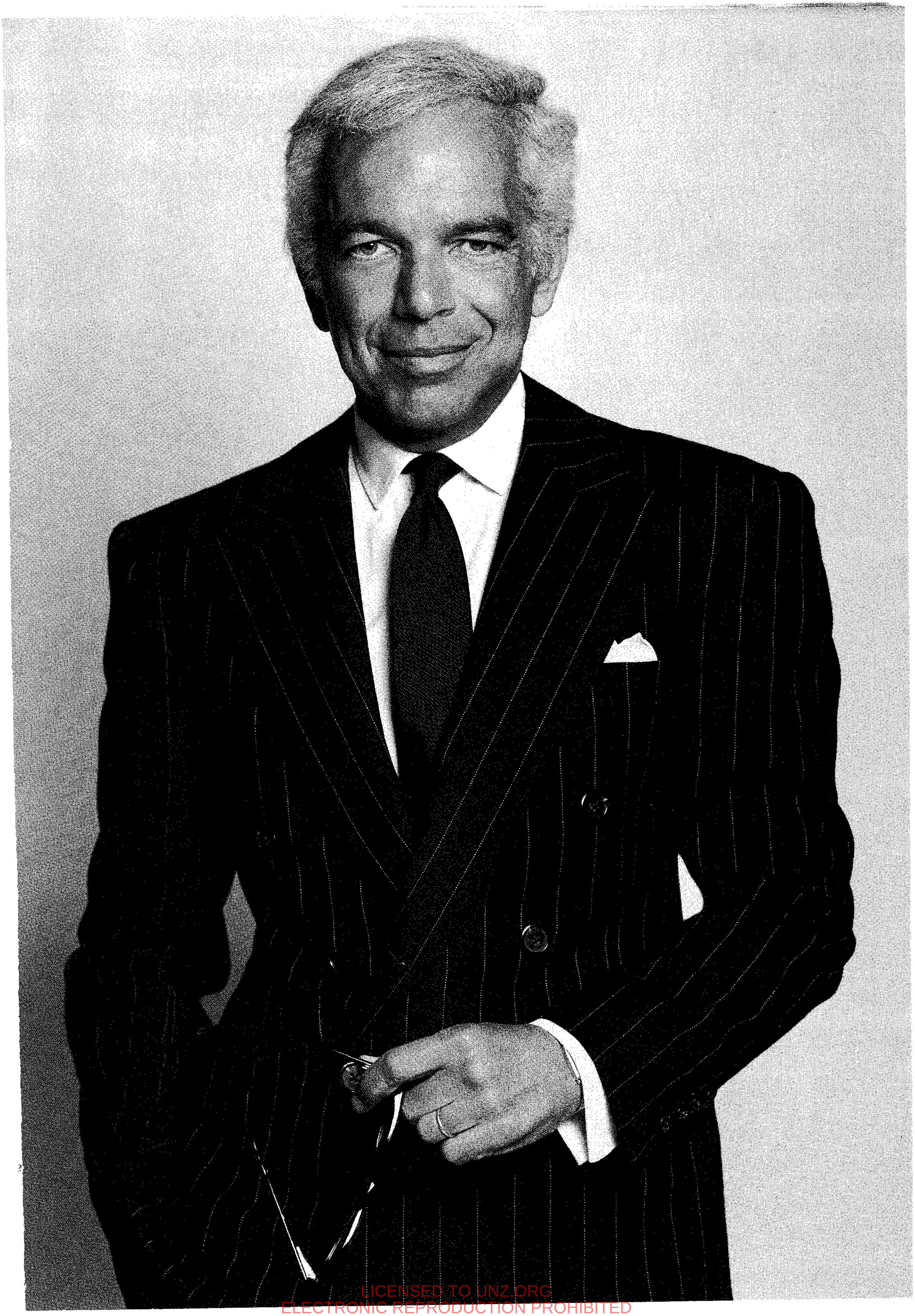

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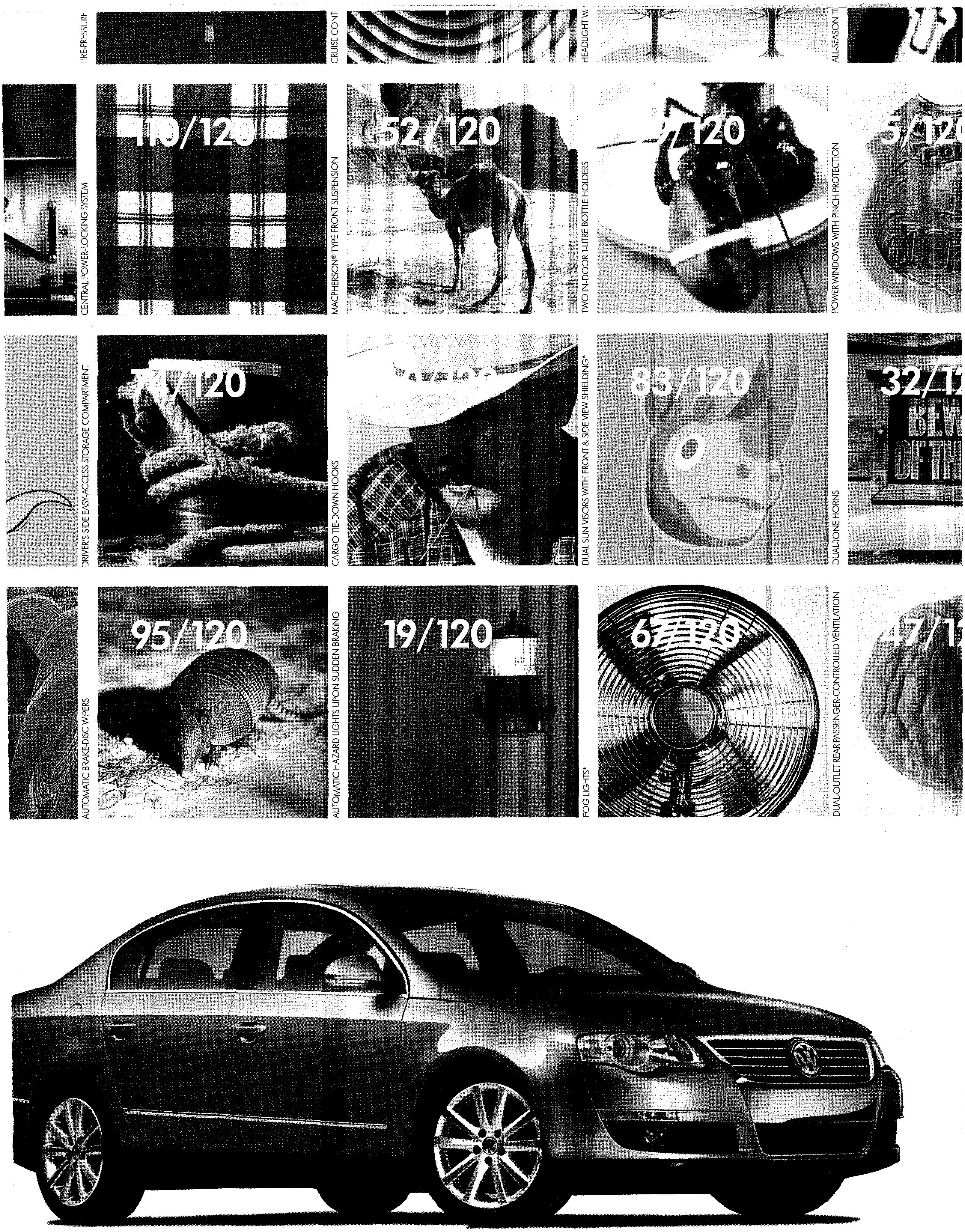
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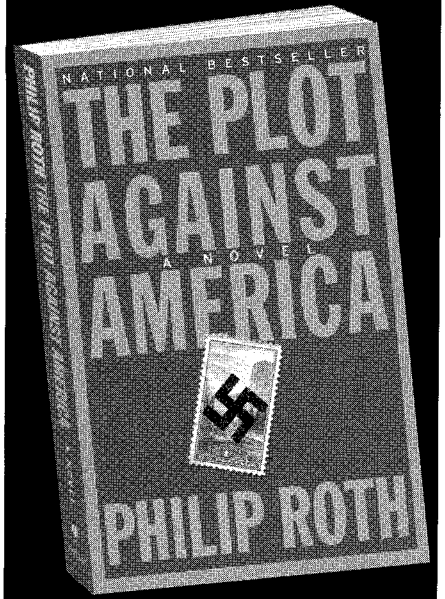

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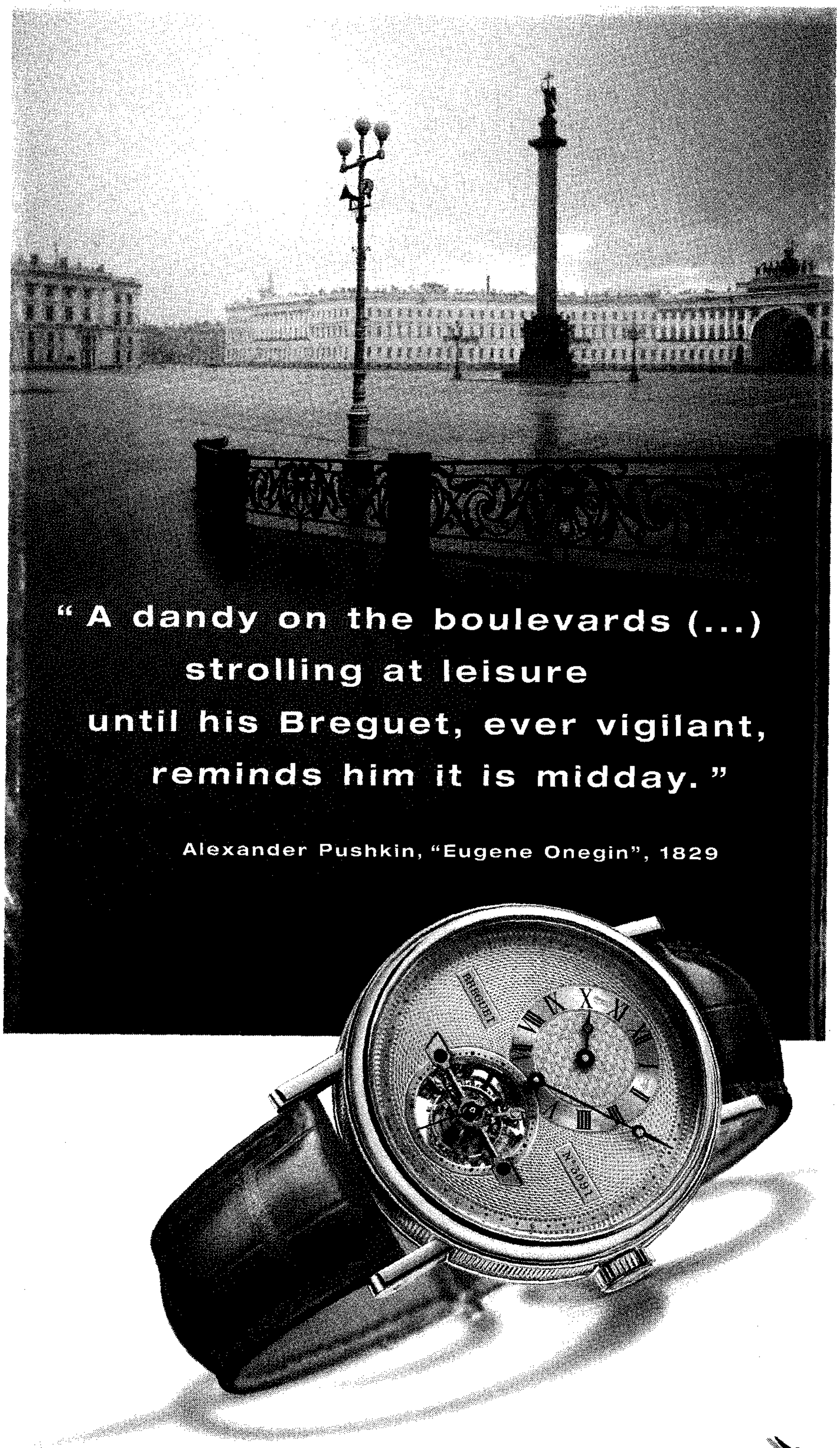
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Alexander Pushkin, "Eugene Onegin", 1829
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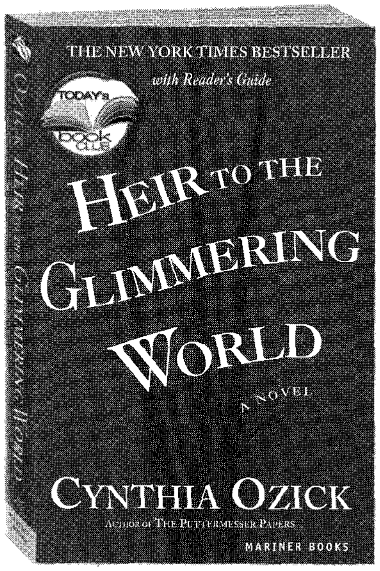
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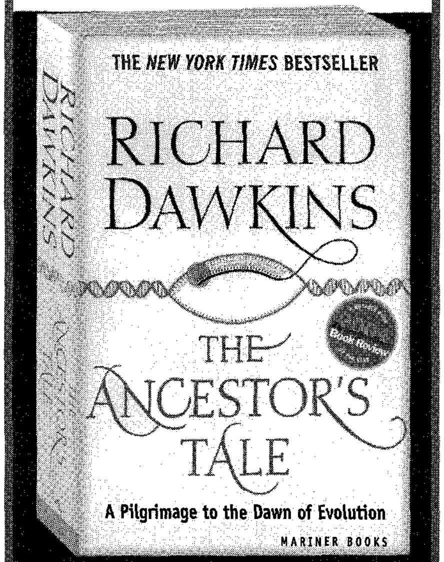
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Mary Oliver (Poem, p. 57), a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, will publish "New and Selected Poems: Volume Two" this month.

Bruce McCall (Cover) has been contributing to the magazine since 1979.

Ken Auletta ("Fault Line," p. 50) writes the magazine's Annals of Communications. His book "Backstory: Inside the Business of News" is out in paperback.

John McPhee ("Coal Train—II," p. 62) is the author of twenty-seven books, including "Uncommon Carriers," which will be published next May.

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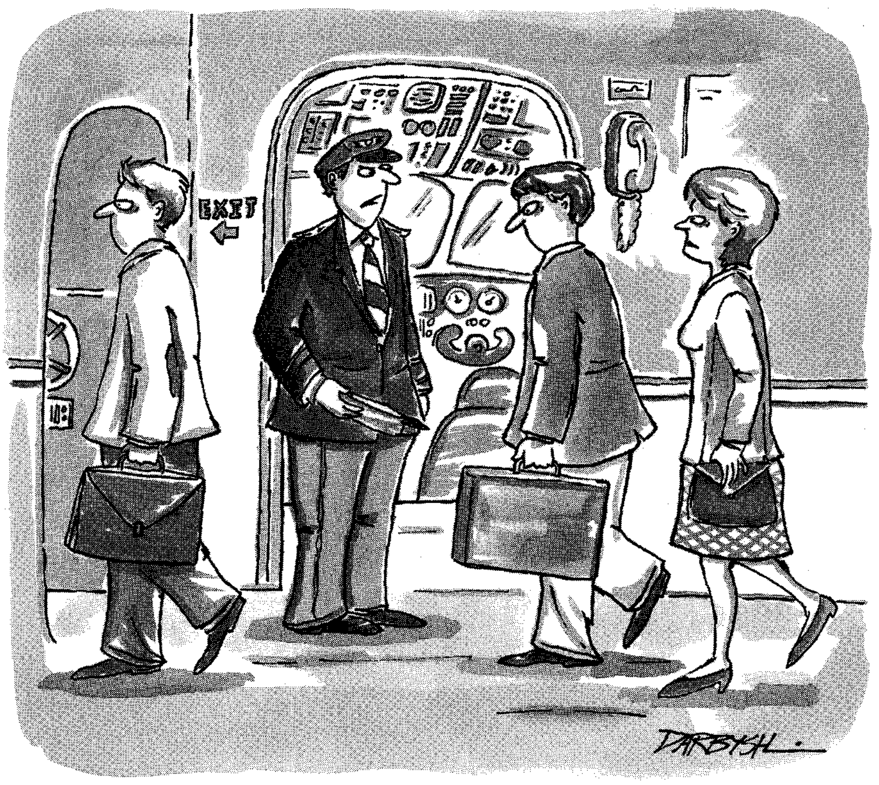
Wislawa Szymborska (Poem, p. 75) received the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature. Her new collection of poems, "Monologue of a Dog," comes out next month.

Malcolm Gladwell (A Critic at Large, p. 80), a staff writer, is the author of "The Tipping Point" and "Blink."

Vince Aletti (On Photography, p. 90) is a photography critic. ♦


EXIT
DARBYSHIRE

"Say, buddy, how about a little something for the landing?"

THE MAIL

BUILDING A BETTER COOKIE

Malcolm Gladwell's article on commercial cookie design charted the relative performances of three kinds of design team, including, thanks to the interest of the project manager, Steve Gundrum, in computer science, a loosely structured group of fifteen people intended to mimic the "open source" model of software development ("The Bakeoff," September 5th). However, the experiment's evolution was not really typical of open-source projects, which rarely begin with the corporate model in evidence here—a large team in a room fighting about the project until someone takes over and alienates everyone else. The successful open-source project usually starts with two or three people who share an idea and begin to create components that will fit together. Whoever instigated the project becomes its de-facto leader, but everyone works on his own part of the project. Open-source methods have proved ideal in situations—like software development—where there is opportunity for refinement and rethinking. In food design, where there are strict dietary goals and an inflexible time line, open source was never likely to be a success. But, ultimately, Gundrum's experiment reveals more about the limits of his analogy than it does about the applicability of software-development paradigms to other industries.

Peter C. Norton
New York Linux Users Group
New York City

SOMETHING FISHY

Reading Mark Singer's article on the restaurateur and fisherman David Pasternack, I was surprised by the observation that on any given day Pasternack receives shipments of seafood from a variety of locations, including abalone from British Columbia ("Gone Fishing," September 5th). In British Columbia, abalone is listed as a threatened species under the Canadian Species at Risk Act, and the harvest of abalone has been banned since 1990. Indeed, the marine biologists working on the Canadian government's National Recovery Strategy for the Northern Abalone, in British Columbia, consider the illegal harvest of abalone, usually conducted by poachers for sale to unscrupulous restaurateurs, the single greatest threat to the species' survival.

Eric Kristianson
Victoria, B.C.
Canada

A MEETING OF MODERNS

Peter Schjeldahl, in his review of Hilary Spurling's two-volume biography of Matisse, reports that Matisse and Picasso met in the spring of 1906, "at the salon of Gertrude and Leo Stein" (Books, August 29th). Although it is quite certain that the two artists met under the auspices of the Steins, there are differences of opinion about where their meeting took place. According to the memoir of Fernande Olivier, Picasso's companion, the two artists met at dinner at the Steins' home in Montparnasse. However, Matisse's daughter, Marguerite Duthuit, had a more vivid recollection: they met at Picasso's Montmartre studio after one of Gertrude's sessions of posing for her portrait. Marguerite recalled that as a child of eleven she was present in the studio when Matisse and Picasso first met, along with Leo, Gertrude, and Michael Stein. After leaving Picasso, Marguerite reported, the party, parading across Paris from Montmartre to Montparnasse, made an odd spectacle, the Steins "in leather-strap sandals, barefoot like Nazarenes."

John Cauman
New York City

•

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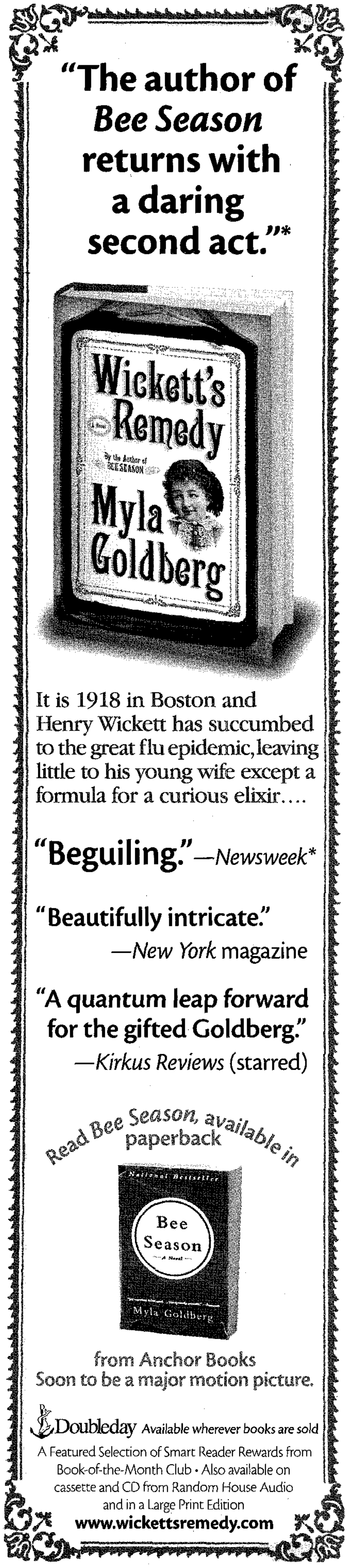

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Adam Cvijanovic's work is at the Bellwether gallery. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
ODDS ARE

Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick are at it again, this time in a revival of Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple" at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre; Joe Mantello directs. (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE
THE SOUND OF FREEDOM

The jazz bassist Charlie Haden first formed the Liberation Music Orchestra in the late sixties, during the Vietnam War era. He's reconvened it whenever the political situation has warranted it, including in the early eighties, when the Reagan Administration was busy in El Salvador. The pianist and arranger Carla Bley is a founding member of the orchestra, but this is the first time she's joined Haden and the band for an extended run in New York. (See page 14.)

ART
LIGHT TOUCH

The Peter Blum gallery presents a big selection of never-before-shown drawings by the local favorite Alex Katz. There are some hundred and forty pieces dating from 1965 to 2002 to look at, depicting subjects both familiar (women's heads, scraps of foliage) and somewhat less familiar (ice skates, cityscapes). (See page 20.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
JUILLIARD JOY

The Juilliard School, the gold standard of American arts institutions, begins its well-earned centennial celebration with two concerts in which James DePreist and Dennis Russell Davies conduct the Juilliard Symphony and the Juilliard Orchestra, respectively, in a selection of classic and contemporary works. (See page 22.)

MOVIES
WHALE OF A TALE

Noah Baumbach, a humorist (and contributor to this magazine), co-wrote Wes Anderson's seagoing family drama "The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou." Now he's back with a film he wrote and directed, "The Squid and the Whale," and it's another family story, this time about two boys dealing with the divorce of their parents (Jeff Daniels and Laura Linney) in nineteen-eighties Brooklyn. (See page 23.)

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
AROUND THE WORLD

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

You want global? Lhasa de Sela, who goes by her first name, grew up in the U.S. and Mexico and now lives in Montreal; sings in French, Spanish, and English; and spent several years in a circus with her sisters. Her most recent album, "The Living Road," sounds like the soundtrack of "Paris, Texas," crossed with a field recording of a Gypsy camp. Her contralto voice is what folks call husky, but what it sounds like is a large orange sun, burnt at the edges and going down. For the past year (and this week, at Symphony Space) de Sela has been playing with a two-piece band. Her stage patter features long, hypnotic anecdotes about her family, but her band wisely leavens the intensity. The guitarist Rick Haworth alternates between traditional six-string and the Mexican *bajo sexto*, while the multi-instrumentalist Mélanie Auclair comes close to stealing the show. Auclair begins on cello and then moves to melodica and cavaquinho, wordlessly adding humor to de Sela's dark invocations. At a recent show, all Auclair had to do was cross her legs and play a melodica solo and the crowd erupted.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR
Alan Ayckbourn's triptych brings together three couples of different social classes on consecutive Christmas Eves. The Manhattan Theatre Club revival stars Mireille Enos, Clea Lewis, Sam Robards, Alan Ruck, Deborah Rush, and Paxton Whitehead. John Tillinger directs. In previews. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

ASHLEY MONTANA GOES ASHORE IN THE CAICOS . . . OR WHAT AM I DOING HERE?
Roger Rosenblatt wrote and Jim Simpson directs this series of comical vignettes starring Bebe Neuwirth, Jenn Harris, Jeffrey DeMunn, and James Waterston. In previews. (The Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

COP-OUT / THE TALKING DOG
Red Radar Productions presents two one-act plays written and directed by John Guare ("Six Degrees of Separation"). "Cop-Out" is a satire of war and classic films, and "The Talking Dog," adapted from Chekhov's "A Joke," explores the relationship between two hang gliders. Opens Oct. 6. (Gene Frankel Theatre, 24 Bond St. 212-868-4444.)

EINSTEIN'S GIFT
The U.S. première of a new work by Vern Thiessen, about the relationship between Albert Einstein and Fritz Haber, both of whom made discoveries that were instrumental in devising methods of mass destruction. In previews. Opens Oct. 6. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

JERSEY BOYS
A new musical about how Frankie Valli and the other members of the Four Seasons came up from blue-collar roots to form the successful pop group. Directed by Des McAnuff, with music by Bob Gaudio, a book by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, and lyrics by Bob Crewe. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

LATINOLOGUES
A collection of comic and thoughtful monologues about the Latino experience in America. Directed by Cheech Marin and written by Rick Najera. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

MASSACRE (SING TO YOUR CHILDREN)
LAByrinth Theatre Company presents a production of a work in progress at the Public, written by José Rivera and directed by Kate Whoriskey, about residents of a New Hampshire town who revolt against a citizen who terrifies them. Opens Oct. 5. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

A NAKED GIRL ON THE APPIAN WAY
Richard Thomas and Jill Clayburgh star in a new comic drama by Richard Greenberg ("Take Me Out"), about parents whose lives are disrupted when their grown children return from a year abroad with surprising news. In previews. Opens Oct. 6. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

THE ODD COUPLE
Neil Simon's classic play stars Nathan Lane as the slovenly sportswriter Oscar Madison and Matthew Broderick as the fastidious photographer Felix Ungar. Joe Mantello directs. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

A SOLDIER'S PLAY
Charles Fuller's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama from 1981, about a murder in a black battalion in Louisiana during the Second World War, receives its first major New York revival. Taye Diggs, Anthony Mackie, James McDaniel, and Steven Pasquale lead the cast. Jo Bonney directs. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

THIRD
Wendy Wasserstein's new play, about a college professor who accuses a student of plagiarism, stars Dianne Wiest, Charles Durning, and Jason Ritter. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

COLDER THAN HERE
MCC Theatre opens its twentieth-anniversary season with the U.S. première of a dark comedy by Laura Wade. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

CYCLING PAST THE MATTERHORN
Shirley Knight and Brenda Wehle star in a comedy by Deborah Grimberg, about a street psychic and her mother, who is losing her sight but not her wit. Directed by Eleanor Holdridge. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

DR. SEX
If Alfred Kinsey was the early progenitor of American sexual diversity, you'd never know it from watching this flashy, Vegas-style musical by Larry Bortniker (who created the music and lyrics and co-wrote the book with Sally Deering). Bortniker's Kinsey (Brian Noonan) is a nerdy proto-swinger who nudges his delectable wife (the amusing Jennifer Simard) and equally delectable lab assistant, Wally (Christopher Corts), into a ménage à trois—wait, make that a ménage à huit, by the time Act II bumps and grinds to a halt. As a full-length musical the material is stretched thin, though it might have been snappy fun as a vaudeville skit. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

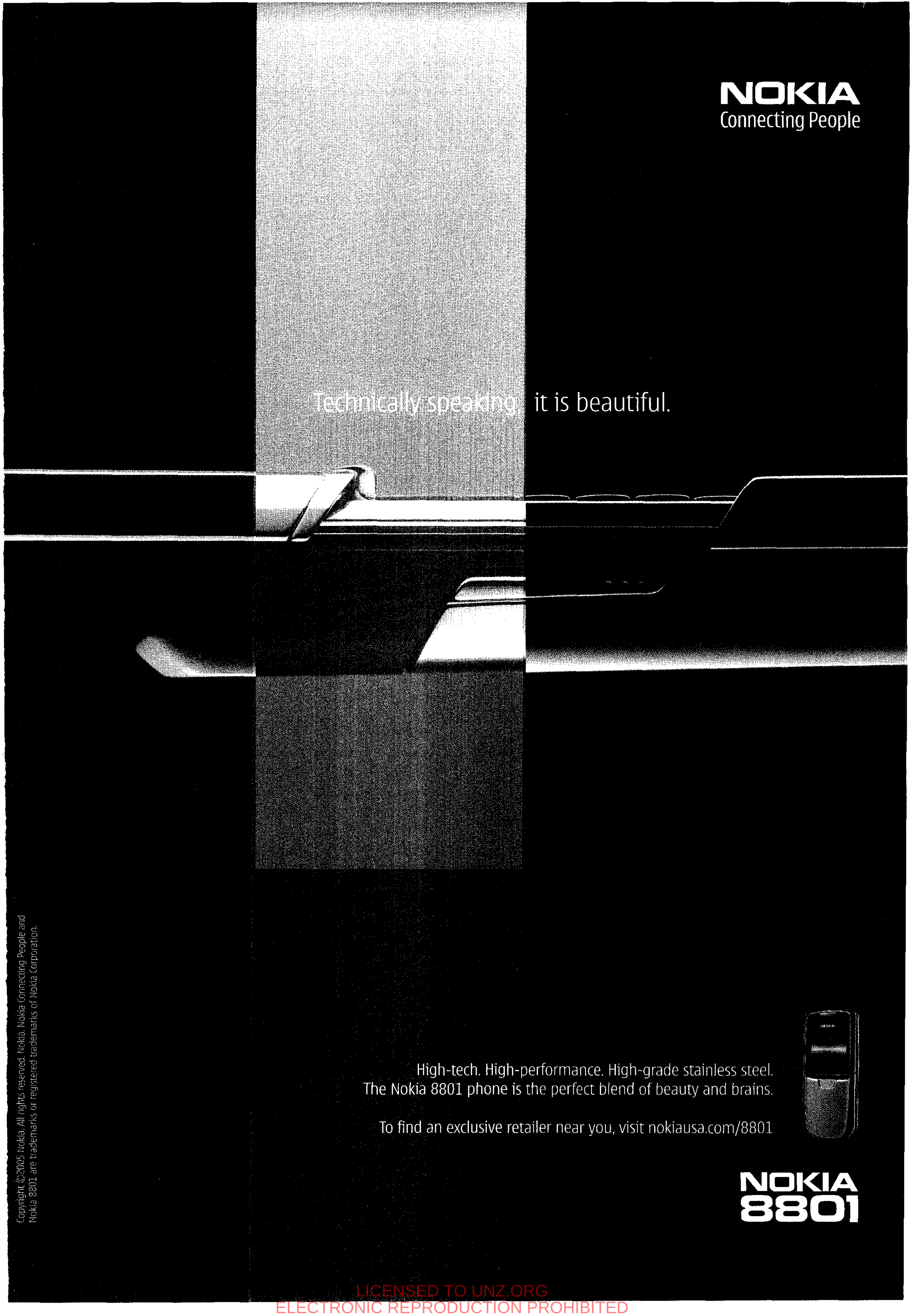
FRAN'S BED
Mia Farrow stars in Playwrights Horizons' thirty-fifth-anniversary season opener. (Reviewed in this issue.) (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Oct. 9.)

THE GREAT AMERICAN TRAILER PARK MUSICAL
Joyful and unashamedly vulgar, Betsy Kelso's comic fable about women in a Florida trailer park and their no-account men is more fun than a chair-throwing episode of Jerry Springer set to music. When a stripper named Pippi (the incandescent Orfeh) moves into Armadillo Acres, on the run from a permanent-marker-sniffing loon named Duke, she gets sympathy from the park's ruling clique, Betty (Linda Hart, a bleached-blond Eartha Kitt with mighty lungs), Linoleum (Marya Grandy), and Pickles (the very funny Leslie Kritzer)—until she steals somebody's husband. The rousing songs, by David Nehls, include the ballad "I Gotta Make Like a Nail (and Press On)," which has the wattage of the disco hit "I Will Survive." And the ingenious set, by Derek McLane ("I Am My Own Wife"), belongs in an art gallery. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE INTELLIGENT DESIGN OF JENNY CHOW
Set in the suburbs of L.A., Rolin Jones's play, at the Atlantic Theatre Company, could be a sci-fi sequel to "Fast Times at Ridgemont High." Its heroine, Jennifer Marcus (the agitated Julienne Hanzelka Kim), is twenty-two, lives at home, and has no friends besides the ones she meets on the Web (all played by the funny, versatile Remy Auberjonois) and a pizza-delivery boy (Ryan King, channelling Judge Reinhold in "Fast Times"). Poor Jennifer is also agoraphobic, obsessive-compulsive, and adopted. She builds a robot (the Jenny Chow of the title) that is supposed to fly to China and find her birth mother. Jennifer's tics and the over-stuffed plot threaten to overwhelm the story, but shrewd, quick direction by Jackson Gay keeps the mother-daughter-robot issues from bogging down, and Takeshi Kata's cunning set has more twists than a Rubik's Cube. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

IN THE WINGS
Jeremy Dobrish directs a new play by Stewart F. Lane, about a couple of wannabe actors whose romance is imperilled when one of them gets a lucky break. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LADIES OF THE CORRIDOR
The Peccadillo Theatre Company revives the play by Dorothy Parker and Arnaud d'Usseau, about the goings on of several denizens of a New York City hotel. The cast includes Susan Jeffries, Jo Ann Cun-



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ningham, and Domenica Cameron-Scorsese. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE MASTER BUILDER
Ibsen's play about an architect with a heavy conscience comes to the Pearl, in a production directed by Shepard Sobel. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

MEDEA
In Alfred Preisser's adaptation of Euripides' tragedy, Medea (April Yvette Thompson) is a familiar type—the woman who claims to be staying in an abusive marriage because her children need a father. When her husband, Jason (Lawrence Winslow, a large, sculpted presence), leaves her for a princess, the childishly petulant Medea cannot, despite Jason's pleas, be reasonable. Preisser has staged the work with brio: the actors are used to great visual effect, and the supporting cast is gifted. Nevertheless, his adaptation seems undeveloped. Instead of getting to the dark heart of the tragedy, Preisser worries too much about preserving the play's classicism. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/3/05.) (H.S.A. Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., near 141st St. 212-868-4444.)

NO FOREIGNERS BEYOND THIS POINT
This new play by Warren Leight ("Side Man"), based on his own experiences in 1980, is about two East Coast liberals teaching English in Guangdong, China. Presented by Ma-Yi Theatre Company and directed by Loy Arcenas. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-352-3101.)

PASTORALIA
A potent, funny adaptation of George Saunders's biting novella. Ed (Ryan Bronz) and Janet (Aimee McCormick) work the caveman attraction at a surreally awful amusement park, where they're required to live in (and forbidden to break) character. Soldiering on to support families on the outside, Ed and Janet become friends. But their insidious, jargon-loving boss (James Stanley) wants Ed to rat out the recalcitrant Janet, on pain of losing his job. The clash of Ed's loyalties is both heartbreaking and—despite the bizarre backdrop—acutely familiar. Yehuda Duenyas directs his own adaptation. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Through Oct. 9.)

THE PAVILION
Two former sweethearts confront their regrets at a high-school reunion, in a drama by Craig Wright ("Orange Flower Water"), presented by the Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre. As the pair, played by Brian D'Arcy James and Jennifer Mudge, sort through their ugly past, a narrator (Stephen Bogardus) delivers sprawling soliloquies that cast a metaphysical light on the action. The play, with its quirky blend of the intimate and the ontological, doesn't quite work, but Wright has a flair for pithy dialogue and offhand lyricism. Directed by Lucie Tiberghien. (224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

POOR THEATER
The show—or, rather, the experience—is performed by four veteran members of the Wooster Group, Kate Valk, Ari Fliakos, Sheena See, and Scott Shepherd, and is divided into three parts, each dedicated to a special influence: the late, hugely influential director Jerzy Grotowski, the avant-garde choreographer William Forsythe, and the artist Max Ernst. The first part recounts the Group's visit to Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre, in Poland, and Grotowski's method for creating what he called a "poor theatre"—a theatre that lacks costuming, artifice, and "hybrid-spectacles," in which the actor tears down the wall between audience and performer. If "Poor Theater" is about anything, it is about love—the love of performance—and about having the courage to make a fool of yourself while declaring it. (10/3/05) (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

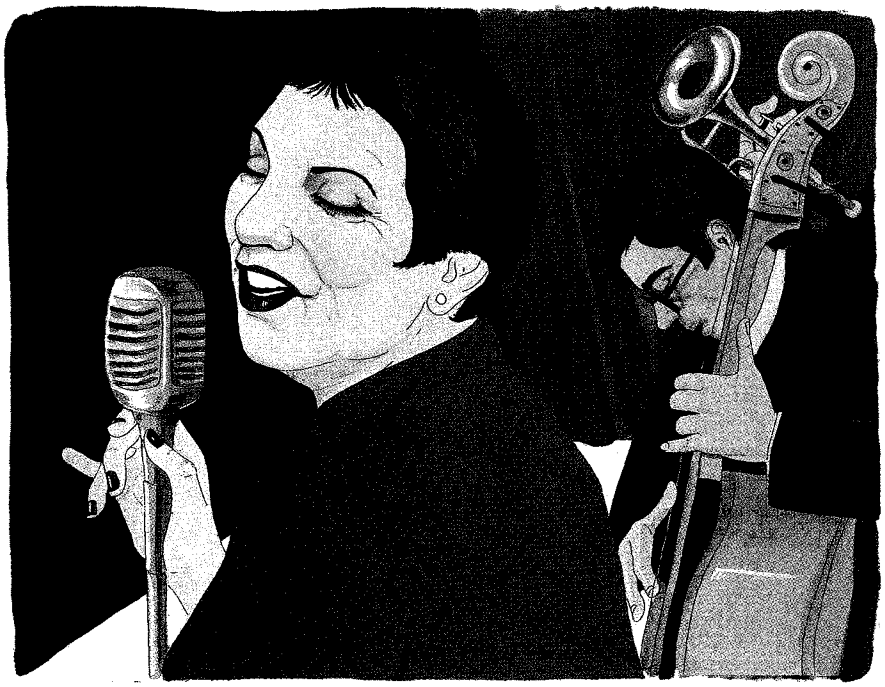
SLUT
This musical about sex and drinking in the East Village was a hit at the New York International Fringe Festival. With a book and lyrics by Ben A. H. Winters and music by Stephen Sislen. Directed by Gordon Greenberg. (A.T.A. Theatre, 314 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

WALKING DOWN BROADWAY
Seven decades before "Sex and the City," Gotham newcomers Marge (the winsome Christine Albright) and Elsie (giddily portrayed by Amanda Jones) went sashaying down Riverside Drive, their eyes peeled for eligible beaux. In this hitherto unproduced play, written by Dawn Powell in 1931, the girls don't manage to land über-capitalists; instead they hook up with two young salesmen who are just as eager as they are to taste the city's pleasures, and to escape the loneliness of its hollow promises. Powell's play has some predictable plot twists, but it's also rather charming, and the Mint has done well to unearth it now. Steven Williford directs. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

A WOMAN OF WILL
Amanda McBroom, author of the 1979 hit ballad "The Rose," has written the book and lyrics for this musical about a modern lyricist who rhapsodizes about Shakespeare's leading ladies as she tries to write songs for an update of "The Merchant of Venice." Music by Joel Silberman, who also directs. (Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

ALTAR BOYZ: Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **DRUMSTRUCK:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FOOLS IN LOVE:** Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **MOVIN' OUT:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100. **ONE-MAN STAR WARS TRILOGY:** Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.



The vocalist Keely Smith opens the "Highlights in Jazz" series on October 6.

LARA TOMLIN

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Oct. 6: The legendary folksinger **Judy Collins.** Oct. 9: Last year **Ghostface,** a founding member of the rap collective Wu-Tang Clan, had a solo record, "The Pretty Toney Album," and he recently rhymed on a key track of a Prefuse 73 album. He's expected to release a new album this winter, which promises more high-energy beats and his signature off-the-wall rhymes. With the Canadian rap group **Swollen Members.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Oct. 5: The Ontario band **Most Serene Republic** layers dreamy, orchestral indie pop with electronic beats on its first full-length album, "Underwater Cinematographer." They open for **Metric,** a Canadian quartet that injects its electro-pop with screaming guitars, New Wave synthesizers, and the occasional drum machine. Oct. 6-7: The local alt-rock combo **Nada Surf** are chart veterans (their single "Popular" was something of a hit in 1996) as well as major-label casualties (Ric Ocasek produced one of their records before they were dropped by Elektra), but above all they are indie-rock survivors—Chris Walla, of the current rock-world darlings Death Cab for Cutie, produced their latest release, "The Weight Is a Gift." Oct. 8: The Bay Area m.c. **Lyrics Born** pours his honey-voiced rhymes over sped-up R. & B. and hip-hop beats. Also known for his work with Lateef the Truth Speaker under the name Latyrx, Lyrics Born is a founding member of Quannum, the West Coast record label that turns out cutting-edge hip-hop

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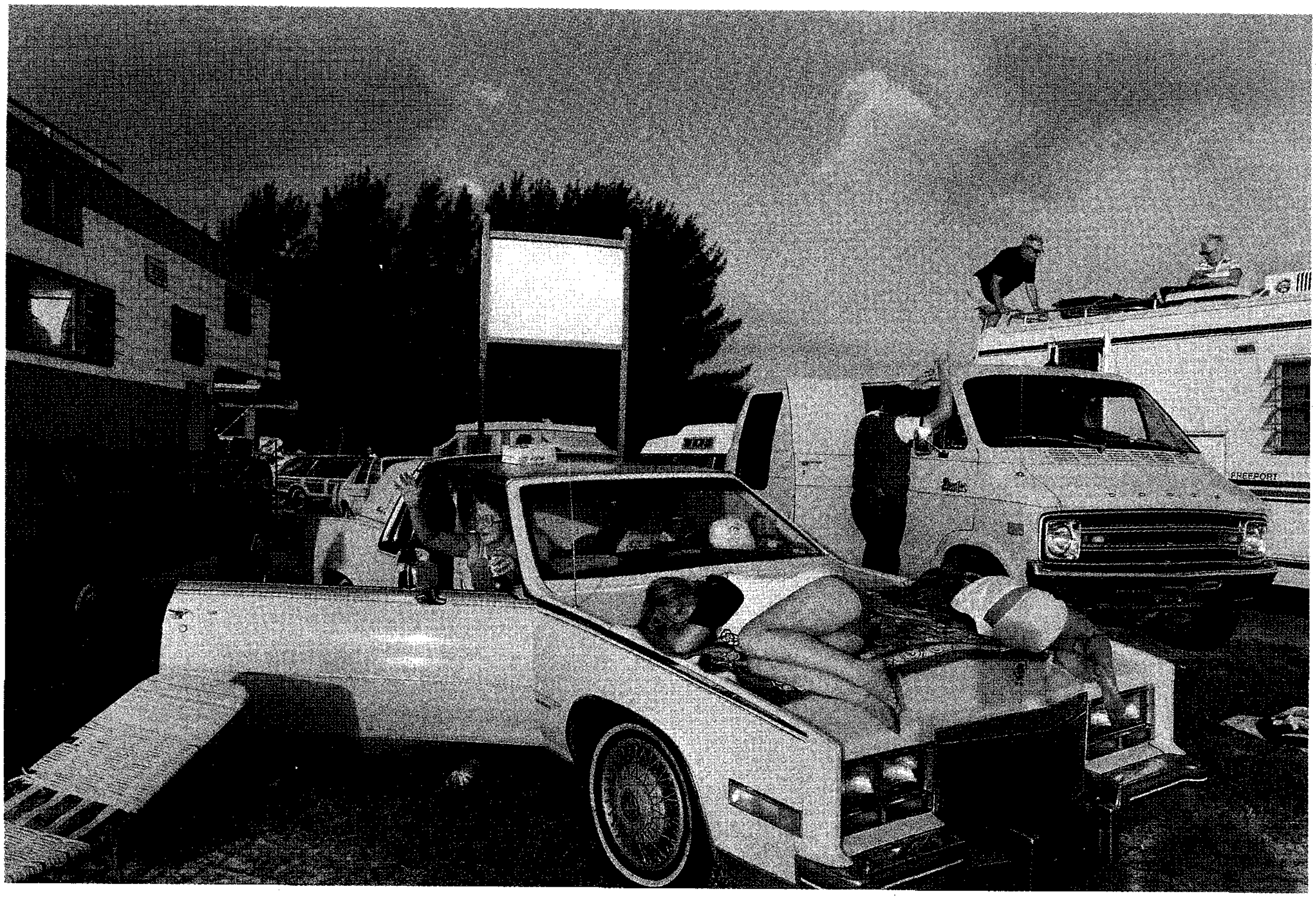

"Cocoa Beach 1, Florida, 1983," from the "Recreation" series, by Mitch Epstein, on view at Sikkema Jenkins.

heavily influenced by turntablism. His latest album, "Same !@#$ Different Day," which came out last spring, is a remix of his well-received 2003 album, "Later That Day . . ." With the **Perceptionists,** a Boston hip-hop duo (Mr. Lif and Akrobatik) known for humorous political lyrics and quick-paced break beats.

BROOKLYN LYCEUM
227 Fourth Ave., at President St., Park Slope (718-857-4816)—Oct. 8: The theatrical Brooklyn-based ensembles **Barbez, Nervous Cabaret,** and **Guignol** offer the finest in rock from the Danube to the Volga. With projections by the photographer **Peter Cunningham.**

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Oct. 5: **Bob Mould's** first band, the post-punk trio Hüsker Dü, had a sizable influence on bands like Nirvana and Green Day. After it broke up, in 1987, Mould had a solo career, briefly fronted another band, Sugar, and then spent much of the nineties writing scripts for professional wrestling. His more recent musical enterprises reveal a fixation with electronic music, although his latest album, "Body of Song," has the rock edge that got him started. Oct. 6: The glistening post-punk of New York's own **Stellastarr*.** Oct. 7: The acclaimed producer and atmospheric guitarist **Daniel Lanois,** noted for his work with U2, Bob Dylan, and Peter Gabriel, is on tour with the Chicago post-rock icons **Tortoise,** spreading the gospel of experimental musical collaboration. Oct. 10: The soul-folk singer **Amos Lee.** Oct. 11: The cheeky British piano player and singer **Jamie Cullum** infuses jazzy pop with a rock sensibility, causing rock purists and strident jazz fans to recoil in horror. The popular reaction, however, has been much sweeter.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Oct. 5-6: The **East Village Opera Company** updates prog rock for a new generation. Oct. 7-8: The singer-songwriter **Michael Penn** stops by with songs from his new album, "Mr. Hollywood Jr., 1947." Oct. 9: The younger Brazilian singer and guitarist **Badi Assad.** Oct. 10: The Los Angeles-based performer **Stew,** who's here Mondays through Oct. 24. Oct. 11: The local soul vocalist **Stephanie McKay.**

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—Oct. 6: **Rob Dickinson,** the former lead singer of the British band the Catherine Wheel, has a new solo album, "Fresh Wine for the Horses," that echoes the guitar-friendly sound of his previous act.

NOKIA THEATRE TIMES SQUARE
Broadway at 44th St. (212-307-7171)—Oct. 7: The popular neo-bluegrass band **Nickel Creek.**

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (212-247-4777)—Oct. 8: The Australian duo **Dead Can Dance** is often improperly thought of as a goth band due to its flair for melodrama and its macabre name, but it actually specializes in richly atmospheric music laced with medieval folk elements and esoteric ethnic influences.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—Oct. 5: The Colorado bluesman and intense multi-instrumentalist **Otis Taylor.** Oct. 8: **Jimmy Thackery,** a founding member of the Nighthawks; his role model is Buddy Guy, and his guitar stings accordingly.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Oct. 6: **Metric** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

SYMPHONY SPACE
Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Oct. 6: The otherworldly singer-songwriter **Lhasa.**

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Oct. 11: **Turbonegro,** Norway's hilariously ribald saviors of rock and roll, perform lurid music that's equal parts garage punk, dark glam-metal pageantry, and sleazy omnisexual hedonism.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Oct. 7: A night of fado, with the Portuguese vocalist **Mariza.** (Carnegie Hall. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Oct. 8: The vocalist **Maude Maggart,** the sister of Fiona Apple, presents an Irving Berlin program.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Oct. 4-9: On a **Liberation Music Orchestra** album, the bassist and leader **Charlie Haden** and his arranger and pianist, **Carla Bley,** translate their indignation at the current Administration into stirring music. The intermittent band came together for the first time in the late sixties and then again in the early eighties, and on the group's new album, "Not in Our Name," Haden and company reinvent pieces by Bill Frisell, Pat Metheny, Samuel Barber, and Dvořák, as well as "America the Beautiful."

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Oct. 4-9: **Delfeayo Marsalis,** the Marsalis brother best known for his skill as a producer, is also an able trombonist and composer who's logged time with the bands of Art Blakey and Elvin Jones.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—It's usually a family affair when the talented and genial guitarist and singer **John Pizzarelli** (here through Oct. 8) settles in. This time around his wife, the vocalist Jessica Molaskey, isn't joining him, but his father, **Bucky,** the dean of classic jazz guitar, is.

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
Playing the straight woman to her then-husband Louis Prima during that wild man's fifties heyday gave **Keely Smith** permanent hipster status, but her talents as a mainstream vocalist—as ev-

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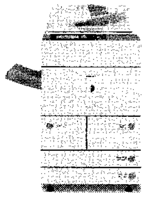
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[4] Fund charges a short-term trading fee of .75% for shares held less than 30 days.

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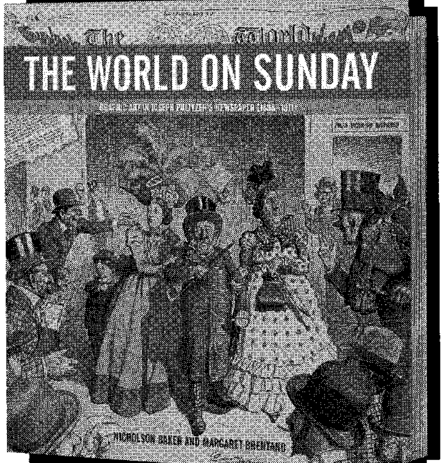
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idenced on her most recent album, "Las Vegas '58: Today"—are still under-recognized. She opens the thirty-third season of this jazz-concert series on Oct. 6. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460.)

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Oct. 5-9: The **Pharoah Sanders** quartet. With soulful balladeering now tempering his titanic eruptions, Sanders has become the complete saxophonist. It's been quite an evolution for the roaring iconoclast who once made even late-period Coltrane sound reserved; these days Sanders's colossal tone and naked expressivity are crucial elements in his openhearted embrace of the audience. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Oct. 4-5: The French pianist **Benoît Delbecq** performs solo. Oct. 6-7: **Gretchen Parlato** comes armed with a 2004 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition win, as well as the effusive praise of both Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Oct. 6: A funky double bill with the bands of the guitarist **Melvin Sparks** and the organist **Reuben Wilson.** Oct. 7-8: Two hard-bop whirlwinds, the pianist **John Hicks** and the drummer **Louis Hayes,** lead a quartet.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Oct. 4-16: The pianist **Bill Charlap** and his trio deliver impeccable swing and have a delicious way with standards. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
The Institute's "Interpretations" series pays tribute to Steve Lacy, who died last year. The soprano saxophone is a ubiquitous instrument, but no one could make it sound the way Lacy could. He was an exacting and ever-inventive player. A glittering array of associates and admirers, including **Irene Aebi, Roswell Rudd, Joe Lovano, Dave Liebman, Bobby Few, Gary Lucas, Richard Teitelbaum, Don Byron,** and **George Lewis,** honor him on Oct. 6. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ When Charles IV was crowned King of Bohemia, in 1347, he set out to make Prague a cultural and artistic capital, like Rome or Paris, a place that would attract and encourage scholars and artists. The great flowering of art and architecture that occurred during his reign and those of his two sons, Wenceslas IV and Sigismund, is celebrated in **"Prague, the Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437."** Through Jan. 3. ♦ **"Sol LeWitt on the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** A warm-weather installation in the roof garden, featuring five spiky stalagmite sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. ♦ From scorpions and crocodiles to the risks attendant upon childbirth, battle, and large-scale construction projects, life in the pharaonic Nile Delta could be dangerous. **"The Art of Medicine in Ancient Egypt"** collects vessels, amulets, and hieroglyphic carvings, including magic knives made from hippo ivory for cutting umbilical cords, tiny pots for prophylactic eye makeup, and a text known as the Edwin Smith Papyrus—a black-and-red-inked treatise on spells, prescriptions, and the treatment of wounds that is one of the world's oldest surviving scientific documents. Through Jan. 15. ♦ The Costume Institute presents **"Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection."** Through Jan. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Stillness: Michael Snow/Sam Taylor Wood,"** a small show of intimately scaled photographs and video works, opens in the Film and Media Gallery on Oct. 5. ♦ **"The High Line"** details Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro's ambitious urban rails-to-trails scheme for the abandoned elevated tracks that run along the West Side from Gansevoort Street to Thirty-fourth Street. Through Oct. 31. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Russia!"** Through Jan. 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—The retrospective **"Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color"** aims to reposition the artist (1867-1938) as a major figure in the development of twentieth-century art. The work here ranges from the architectural drawings of his first career to his later color-saturated symbolic landscapes. Opens Oct. 7. ♦ Drawings and a new animation piece will be on view in **"Raymond Pettibon."** Opens Oct. 8. ♦ **"Robert Smithson,"** a retrospective of drawings, constructions, and collages, includes filmed, photographed, and sketched documentation of the iconic "Spiral Jetty." Through Oct. 23. ♦ **"Building and Breaking the Grid, 1962-2002."** Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"Still Life: A Vital Theme"** uses works from the permanent collection to explore the still-life tradition in the twentieth century. Through Jan. 15. ♦ Work by eight artists, including Terry Winters, Ati Maier, and Matthew Ritchie, is on display in **"Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing."** Through Oct. 9. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—Recent work by Dinh Q. Lê is on view in **"Vietnam: Destination for the New Millennium."** Through Jan. 15. ♦ **"Images of the Divine: South and Southeast Asian Sculpture from the Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection"** gathers a small but lovely assortment of stone and cast-metal statuary from all over the continent. Through Jan. 8. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance"** is a thrilling show, quick to stoke imagination and amazement. Items on view include wing suits for skydivers, fast-deploying webs for riot control, and the Tumbleweed, a giant computerized beach ball that follows the wind on Mars, periodically deflating to collect data. Through Oct. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

DRAWING CENTER
35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—In Trinidad, carnival revolves around mas, elaborately costumed group masquerade. Peter Minshall has been making flamboyant mas designs for thirty years, and **"Looking at the Spirits: Peter Minshall's Carnival Drawings"** gathers quantities of his sketches and notes on little pieces of paper pinned floor-to-ceiling on the walls. Human fireflies, bat-winged skulls, bird-headed divas, and fire-ruffed phoenixes take shape in Minshall's thumbnail plans. But it's the video showing a full-scale outdoor performance of a red-clad troupe—African dance meets Las Vegas glitz in a thronged street party—that really sells the show. Through Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

GROLIER CLUB
47 E. 60th St. (212-838-6690)—In August, 1956, two months after their wedding, Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes posed in Paris for a photograph in which they glow with intelligence, good looks, and delight. In Yorkshire in September, they looked even

happier. Of course, it didn't last. **"No Other Appetite: Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes, and the Blood Jet of Poetry"** gathers these photographs, along with their marriage certificate and other memorabilia, including letters, typescripts, manuscripts, first editions, annotated books, and another heartbreaking photo, a color snapshot of Plath in 1962—the year before her death—with the couple's toddler daughter and infant son. Through Nov. 19. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"André Kértesz."** Through Nov. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
2 E. 63rd St. (212-838-0230)—The photographer Mariana Cook's **"Faces of Science"** includes more than twenty illuminating portraits of eminent scientists. Through Oct. 28. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 9 to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Scratch"** presents work by the museum's three artists-in-residence for 2004-05: Michael Queenland, William Cordova, and Marc André Robinson. Through Oct. 23. ♦ **"hrlm: pictures,"** a survey of Harlem photographs by James Van Der Zee, Aaron Siskind, Gordon Parks, and Dawoud Bey, among others. Through Oct. 23. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

DIANE ARBUS
If you thought the Met's "Revelations" retrospective had exhausted the supply of unfamiliar Arbus material, think again. Not all of the forty-nine photos here will be new to Arbus aficionados, but they all offer fresh evidence that her appetite for oddity was matched by her fascination with the ordinary. For every image of a transvestite, a stripper, or a woman with what looks like a small bath mat crumpled on her head, there's one of an elderly couple strolling in the park or a vet holding a little American flag. The show's most startling picture—of a woman masturbating a man on an unmade bed—is hung pointedly next to a shot that noses right into a gaggle of Catholic schoolgirls. Through Oct. 15. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)

ROBERT BORDO
Bordo's breakout works from the nineteen-eighties resembled painted versions of Minor White photographs, full of light and shadow and complex texture. His recent canvases are more low key, with a palette of soothing pastels and anemic grays. Hazy landscapes, seascapes, and skyscapes carry understated titles like "Lazy Game," "Daybreak," or the shruggingly simple "Another Day" (which doubles as the show's title). Bordo veers from abstraction in "[Wipeout]," a scraped-down canvas with a few residual splotches at the bottom, to representation in the lovely "Open Studio," a light-blue field broken by barely sketched-in squares that suggest paintings hung salon style on a studio wall. Quiet and droll, these paintings are an antidote to a fall art world filled with flashier gestures. Through Oct. 22. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave. 212-367-7474.)

MITCH EPSTEIN
With these twenty-five photos from his book "Recreation: American Photographs 1973-1988," Epstein trains an amused, affectionate, but hardly uncritical eye on leisure pursuits from Topanga Canyon to Central Park. With the exception of a reveller's-eye view of a Mardi Gras float, he sticks to the uneventful: a motorboat ride, a yard sale, an exotic dancer's photo op, two boys sneaking a smoke on a riverbank. The Technicolor crispness of his modestly scaled dye-transfer prints allows Epstein to short-circuit nostalgia and illuminate timeless moments of self-indulgence, camaraderie, obliviousness, and unself-conscious humanity. Through Oct. 22. (Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

TABLES FOR TWO
MAREMMA

228 W. 10th St. (212-645-0200)—How is it that no one thought of a Spaghetti Western restaurant before? This earnest, weird little place is named for the arid part of Tuscany where Sergio Leone filmed his raw horse operas. Unfortunately, the owner, Cesare Casella, didn't make use of Ennio Morricone's whistling soundtracks, and the décor settles for mounted longhorns and a few travel-brochure photos. The burden of the theme is carried instead by the goofy names of the dishes—Earn-Your-Spurs, which is short ribs and grits, and the Sloppy Guiseppe, which is shredded pork and rib meat over pasta. But the cowboy gimmickry eventually yields to the sophisticated tone that Casella perfected at his other restaurant, Beppe.

Every plate, small or large, comes with a great sprig of fresh herbs, and the fries have the most appealing combination: fried sage and oregano. There's also a welcome carryover from Beppe in the bean sampler, a mix of heirloom beans simply dressed, like the creamy, giant brown-and-purple *fagioli diavoli.* A terrific piece of sautéed bluefish, with supercrisp skin, is listed as a small plate but could easily be a main course.

"About the Rocky Mountain oysters," the waiter says discreetly. "I must point out that they are not really oysters. They are veal testicles." They taste like the peppery batter they've been fried in, but the origin of their alias is apparent from the slippery texture inside. Tender grilled rabbit over a shredded-rabbit-and-radicchio coleslaw is, for once, an innovative rabbit preparation that works. One baffling item, Bordatino di Mare, looks like fish sticks but turns out to be baked seafood polenta with a too-hot dipping sauce.

Maremma falls short in some of its entrées: the Tuscan steak is completely overwhelmed by its chili rub, and the trout, head split wide, suffers the same fate. The tuna could be meat loaf under a heavy tomato sauce. The best right now is the pappardelle with a wild boar sauce that has a hint of chocolate. Still, there's an endearing quality to the whole operation. Casella has invented a cuisine most diners never wanted, and the fact that much of it shows promise should be commended. (Open daily for dinner and Sundays for brunch. Entrées $16-$28.)

—*Owen Phillips*

FROM THE AUTHOR OF
THE SHELL COLLECTOR

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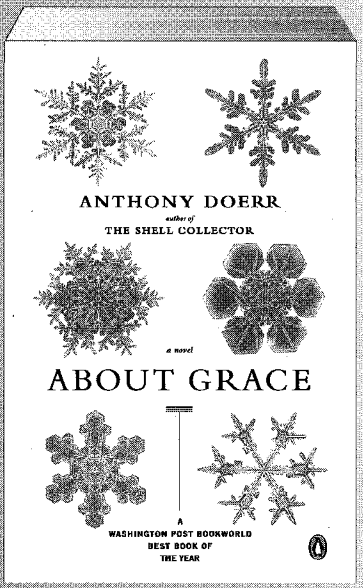
—*Newsday*



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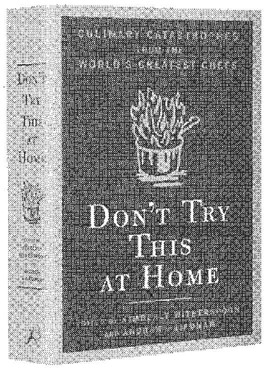

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BARRY LE VA
"9g-Wagner: Variation II" is the sequel to a sculpture that appeared in Le Va's retrospective at the I.C.A. in Philadelphia earlier this year, a carefully spaced composition of rubber-coated geometric forms that looks like a modular furniture arrangement in basic black or pieces of a conceptual jigsaw puzzle. The nod to music is evident: geometric forms evoke notes or measures, and drawings for the sculpture could be scores produced from an idiosyncratic version of notation. Le Va proves that geometry, even reduced to cubed, rounded, and pointed simplicity, can be symphonic while avoiding the bombast of Wagner—and contemporary art peers like Serra. This is art with boundaries: taut, but complete. Through Oct. 8. (Danese, 535 W. 24th St. 212-223-2227.)

PHILIP PEARLSTEIN
Pearlstein's languid nudes, lounging under the aerial gaze of the painter, are old favorites for New York gallerygoers. Over time they've moved into brighter rooms, decorated with kilims and model airplanes, pink flamingos and Chinese kites. Every object serves as a compositional foil or a dampened suggestion of desire spent or so long awaited that the anticipation has gone stale. One canvas here goes meta: two models sit with the sketch of a third (or, perhaps, of one of them). Otherwise, Pearlstein's work is like an undisturbed time capsule to which he's been contributing steadily since his first solo show, on Tenth Street back in 1955. Through Oct. 22. (Cuningham, 541 W. 25th St. 212-242-2772.)

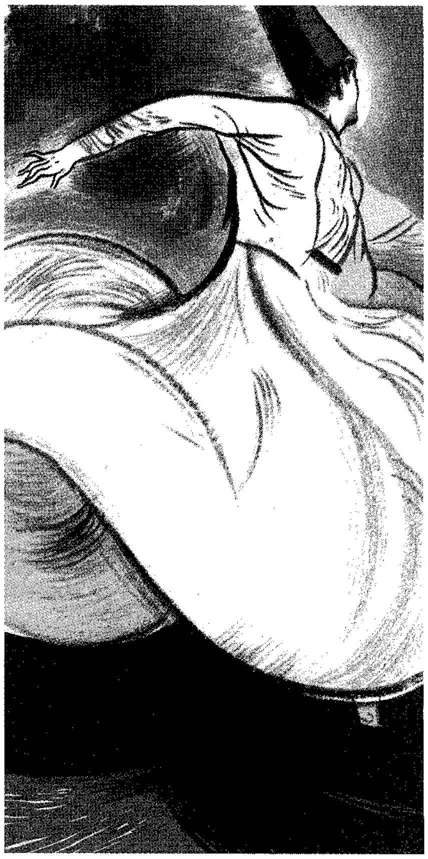
INEZ VAN LAMSWEERDE AND VINOODH MATADIN
For a show commemorating their twenty-year collaboration, Van Lamsweerde and Matadin fill one long wall from floor to ceiling with more than five hundred unframed photographs, many familiar from glossy editorial spreads and ad campaigns. But this busy couple is not content with being successful fashion and celebrity photographers; they want to be artists too. So their pictures of Tom Cruise, Karl Lagerfeld, Björk, and a bearded Kate Moss face off across the gallery with a series of digitally collaged creatures that start off as nude women and end up as fairy-tale grotesques. In this standoff between art and commerce, neither side wins. Through Oct. 29. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)

PALOMA VARGA WEISZ
Some overdramatic presentation aside (pedestals designed to look like pews or other ecclesiastical furnishings), the wood carvings here exhibit rare beauty and craftsmanship. A stout little boy in chain mail, reminiscent of Max from "Where the Wild Things Are," stands guard near the entrance; busts carved from limewood morph to include extra eyes or the features of a dog above a ruff collar; a woman sleeps peacefully, her head cradled in two outsized hands. A length of gray fabric suspended from the ceiling holds a set of soulfully rendered limbs and a head, suggesting weightlessness or the pleasure of a deep sleep in tangled sheets. Removed from their liturgical trappings, the carvings are subtle, and linger dreamily in the imagination. Through Oct. 8. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.)

"25 YEARS: SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS 1979-2004"
This engaging survey of the Baumgartner gallery's first quarter century in business (in Washington, D.C., New York's meatpacking district, and now Chelsea) includes work by Pat Steir, Thomas Nozkowski, Bruce Nauman, Malcolm Morley, and Richard Artschwager, among others. Two of the best pieces were made this year: a balanced stone sculpture by George Quasha and Danielle Webb's boulder-shaped work made of painted and crumpled paper. Through Oct. 12. (522 W. 24th St. 212-242-4514.)

Short List

TOM BURCKHARDT: Golden, 539 W. 23rd St. 212-727-8304. Through Oct. 15. **ADAM CVIJANOVIC:** Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-929-5959. Through Oct. 15. **PHILIP-LORCA DICORCIA:** Pace MacGill, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000. Through Oct. 8. **DISFARMER:** Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978. Through Oct. 29. **MARCEL DZAMA:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through Oct. 8. **CHRIS JORDAN:** Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370. Through Oct. 15. **SOL LEWITT:** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through Oct. 15. **ROY LICHTENSTEIN:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Oct. 22. **MARTIN MULL:** Spike, 547 W. 20th St. 212-627-4100. Through Nov. 12. **YOSHITOMO NARA:** Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889. Through Oct. 8. **YUKEN TERUYA:** Bienvenu, 529 W. 20th St. 212-206-7990. Through Oct. 15.



The Whirling Dervishes of Turkey perform at Town Hall on October 8.

JILLIAN TAMAKI

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ALEX KATZ
Last spring's unveiling of a suite of Edward Hopper drawings is echoed by this cache of never-before-seen Katz drawings from 1965 to 2002. Like Hopper's, these sketches are quietly precise studies of everyday life. Lined up like storyboards or comic-book panels, they chart the paces of mundane obsession: exploring the structure of a picnic table or a pair of ice skates or toying with the composition of figures at a dinner party. Other drawings cycle through the seasons, depicting swimmers at the beach in summer and city scenes in the fall, with a turn of interest to blossoms in spring. The show is densely packed—it contains nearly a hundred and forty drawings—but given Katz's spare, clean style it doesn't feel overloaded. Through Nov. 12. (Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

OHAD MEROMI
A new Israeli video aesthetic seems to be rising here in the States. Meromi's "Cyclops" follows Guy Ben-Ner's practice of blending amateur home video, ancient storytelling, and surrealist experimentalism with other traditions: children's theatre, low-budget horror flicks, Joan Jonas's pioneering video

art. Stiff actors (read: fellow-artists and friends) don deliberately chintzy costumes and wield crude props, retelling in disjointed fashion and sans dialogue an episode in Odysseus's epic travels. Related sculptures (they could be props from the video) hark back to mid-century modernism's love affair with archetypes, mythology, Joseph Campbell, and Jung. It's a sophisticated batch of references, but packaged so that only the truly initiated can read between the lines of his faux-naïf presentation. Through Oct. 8. (Harris Lieberman, 89 Vandam St. 212-206-1290.)

DANCE

"ORPHEUS AND EURIDICE"
The composer Ricky Ian Gordon's latest song cycle, which reimagines Euridice as a lover destroyed by a debilitating illness, is blended with dance theatre in an evening directed by the veteran opera choreographer Doug Varone. The soprano Elizabeth Futral and the clarinettist Todd Palmer perform the title roles, gamely dancing alongside eight members of Doug Varone and Dancers; the trained dancers' willowy flexibility is used to frame the sweetly awkward couple. The pianist Melvin Chen plays a white piano onstage. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Oct. 5 and Oct. 7-8 at 8.)

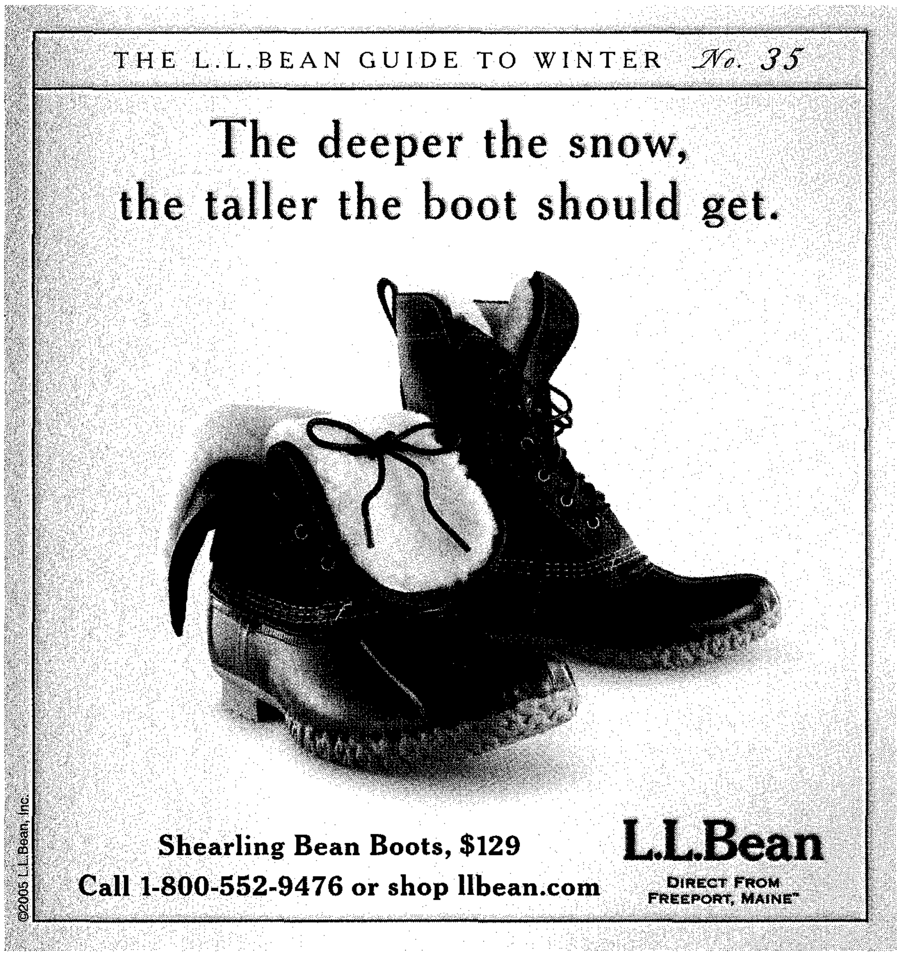
"TALL HORSE"
BAM's Next Wave Festival opens with this joint production from South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company and Mali's Sogolon Puppet Troupe, a sweeping narrative of a captured giraffe's 1827 journey from the Sudan to Paris. The show's live actors and agile puppeteers never overshadow its extraordinary puppets, designed by Adrian Kohler and the seventh-generation Malian puppeteer Yaya Coulibaly. Their dazzling creations include gliding antelopes, a giant pasha, and the main character—an awe-inspiring sixteen-foot giraffe. Directed by Marthinus Basson, with choreography by Koffi Kôkô and an original score by the Kalahari Surfers' Warrick Sony. (Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Oct. 4-8 at 7:30 and Oct. 9 at 3.)

BALLET AUSTIN
Since the choreographer Stephen Mills took over as artistic director in 2000, this Texan troupe has gained a reputation as a revitalized company on the move. This week, it makes a bid for national prominence with its New York début, offering Mills's newest work, "Desire and Three Movements," set to music by Arvo Pärt and Steve Reich, and two excerpts from his larger repertory pieces. "One/the Body's Grace," from "Touch," interprets Baroque arias. "Ashes," from "Light/the Holocaust and Humanity Project," follows the story of a Shoah survivor. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 5-8 at 8 and Oct. 9 at 2 and 7:30.)

"MAKING MUSIC VISIBLE"
In an evening of music, spoken word, and movement, dancers clad in flowing robes and bathed in colored lights use their bodies to illustrate specific sounds with corresponding gestures, demonstrating Rudolf Steiner's obscure art of eurythmy. The performance is set to live performances of music by Dvořák and poetry by Dylan Thomas, among others. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Oct. 5 at 8.)

BLACK GRACE
The all-male ensemble from New Zealand continues its run at the New Victory Theatre. (209 W. 42nd St. 212-563-2266. Oct. 6-7 at 7, Oct. 8 at 2 and 7, and Oct. 9 at noon and 5.)

YOKO HIGASHINO AND HIROAKI UMEDA
Two Japanese choreographers offer highly stylized yet loosely constructed premières. Higashino's "ALARM!—Zero Hour Edition" is a Pina Bausch-like collage of vivid, enigmatic scenes. Higashino vamps in a blond wig; another dancer, wrapped in red ribbon and festooned with a doll, a keyboard, and a pot, joyfully snips at the ties that bind her; alarm clocks periodically ring. In Umeda's solo, "While Going to a Condition," he stands in place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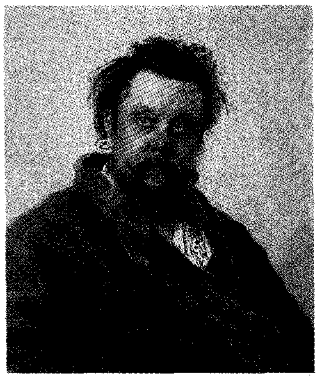
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
MOTHER RUSSIA



ILYA REPIN, "PORTRAIT OF THE COMPOSER MODEST MUSSORGSKY" (1881)

"Russia!"—filling the Guggenheim to the brim with nine centuries' worth of art, from icons to videos—is huge enough to feel scanty: rather than bring so much Russia here, why don't we all just go over there? The classic icons amaze; if you've never loved the form, you will now. Art from the reigns of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great disappoints. Selections of foreign painting from the Hermitage are thin. And canonical avant-garde work by Malevich et al., while terrific, is familiar. Interest quickens in the nineteenth century, when rebels against the academy abjured aestheticism and, as the Wanderers, took to the hinterland with art about and for the people. Naturalism of that time, notably by the underknown Ilya Repin, stirred a Tolstoyan broth of pungent humanity that would recur in surprising variants of Socialist Realism. The late-Soviet underground climaxes with Eric Bulatov's Pop stunner, "Krasikov Street" (1977): hello, Lenin, and never mind. Recent Russian art seems hectic and puzzling. You may have to be there.

—Peter Schjeldahl

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and sends small, then increasingly larger ripples of motion through his slinky body. The dynamic lighting—geometric shafts of illumination like electric Mondrian—and the static-burst sound score, both designed by Umeda, are as integral to the dance as his movement. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Oct. 6-8 at 7:30.)

"HANDSOME BLUE SKY"
The choreographer Ko Murobushi, who trained under the late Butoh master Tatsumi Hijikata, is currently touring the U.S. with three members of his all-male Edge Co. As strong light gleams on their bare backs and legs, the underwear-clad dancers twist their muscled bodies into stark, sculpted poses and shoulder heavy, reverberating brass boards. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 212-752-3015. Oct. 6-8 at 7:30.)

HOI POLLOI
The young Boston choreographer Sara Sweet Rabidoux has a filmmaker's eye for quirky, instantly identifiable body language, which she borrows liberally from sources as diverse as the Sears catalogue and campy horror flicks. In its second Joyce SoHo season, Rabidoux's offbeat company performs recent works about secretaries, Sylvia Plath, and online shopping, along with "Cupcake," from 2003, a birthday-party farce in which the kiddies become possessed. (155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Oct. 6-8 at 8.)

WHIRLING DERVISHES OF TURKEY
A performance of this seven-hundred-year-old Sufi ritual—in this case by members of the Galata Mevlevi Order of Istanbul, accompanied by some of Turkey's finest classical musicians, making their New York début in a World Music Institute presentation—raises the same issues as all religious ceremonies put on the theatrical stage. Authentic whirling is a serene, meditative spinning—an inward-turning spiritual quest that can strike spectators as transportive or as soporific. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Oct. 8 at 8.)

"DANCEOFF!"
This revue of short pieces, hosted by Terry Dean Bartlett and Katie Workum, often showcases the lighter, zanier aspects of the dance scene. Past shows have included dancers in football gear elegantly passing and tumbling in slo-mo and a nude Caravaggesque youth virtuosically twisting himself like a Transformer while ably concealing his nether regions without so much as a fig leaf. The lineup this time includes Christopher Williams, Pig Iron Theatre, Julian Barnett, David Neumann and Andrew Dinwiddie, and Leigh Garrett. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Oct. 11-12 at 8 and 10.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Oct. 5 and Oct. 11 at 8 and Oct. 8 at 1:30: Most Met productions honorably endure from year to year, but Elijah Moshinsky's glorious staging of **"Ariadne auf Naxos"** seems to come back in each revival with its energy magically refreshed. Strong casting helps, and this run features Violeta Urmana (a darkly radiant Ariadne), Diana Damrau, Jon Villars, Christopher Maltman, and Thomas Allen, with Susan Graham, her vibrant singing and detailed acting perfectly integrated, offering her first Composer at the house; Kirill Petrenko conducts. (These are the final performances.) ♦ Oct. 6 and Oct. 10 at 8: Philippe Jordan, who made a stunning début last season conducting the Met's best "Don Giovanni" in years, is back to lead a revival of **"Carmen,"** another production that could use some focus and fire. Milena Kitic, in her Met début, takes the title role, joined by Marco Berti (a bright and powerfully voiced young tenor) as Don José, Ruth Ann Swenson, and Jean-Luc Chaignaud. ♦ Oct. 7 at 8: Renée Fleming is the star of Massenet's **"Manon,"** an opera beloved for its ancien-régime ambience and a bevy of favorite arias. The formidable Marcelo Álvarez is Des Grieux; Jesús López-Cobos conducts a tasteful but full-blooded performance. ♦ Oct. 8 at 8: Cesare Levi's bouncy production of Rossini's **"La Cenerentola"** returns with Olga Borodina, a commanding mezzo-soprano and a surprisingly gifted comedienne, in the title role and Barry Banks as Don Ramiro; Antonello Allemandi, in his début, conducts. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Oct. 5 at 7:30: Gilbert and Sullivan's **"Patience,"** with Michael Ball, Kevin Burdette, Tonna Miller, and Myrna Paris; Gary Thor Wedow conducts. (This is the final performance.) ♦ Oct. 6 and Oct. 11 at 7:30 and Oct. 8 at 1:30: Leon Botstein, a conductor whose penchant for underserved repertory has taken him far, makes his City Opera début leading the first New York performances in nine decades of **"Ariane et Barbe-Bleue,"** an opera by Paul Dukas, a contemporary of Debussy, that some regard as highly as "Pelléas." Renate Behle and Ethan Herschenfeld take the title roles. ♦ Oct. 7 at 8: James Robinson's production of Rossini's **"Il Viaggio a Reims"** is a devilish charmer, undermining the composer's hymn to European royalty without forgetting that the whole thing is really just about great singing. (Never more so than in the "Quattordicimino," a virtuoso finale for fourteen soloists.) Maria Kanyova, Allyson McHardy, Javier Abreu, Andrew Drost, and Eduardo Chama are particularly strong; George Manahan draws a light and brilliant accompaniment from the pit. (This is the final performance.) ♦ Oct. 8 at 8: The last performance of **"Madama Butterfly,"** featuring Shu Ying Li and Brandon Jovanovich; Ari Pelto. ♦ Oct. 9 at 1:30: **"Tosca"** returns to the repertory, with Carla Thelen Hanson (a début), Jorge Antonio Pita, and Todd Thomas in the leading roles; John DeMain. (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

DICAPO OPERA
New York's third professional opera company begins its season with **"La Bohème,"** with Inna Dukach and Derek Taylor, among others, heading the cast. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 212-288-9438. Oct. 6 at 6:30, Oct. 7-8 at 8, and Oct. 9 at 4.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Charles Dutoit, the world's most stylish executant of the French and Russian repertories, leads the Philharmonic in works by Ravel and Prokofiev (a selection of pieces from "Romeo and Juliet"); Sarah Chang is the soloist in Dvořák's Violin Concerto. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Oct. 5-6 and Oct. 11 at 7:30 and Oct. 8 at 8.)

PHILIP GLASS'S "ORION"
Glass, a composer deeply influenced by non-Western music, brought the world to his doorstep in this commission for the 2004 Olympics in Athens. Music performed by the Philip Glass Ensemble will provide the frame for solo contributions by such performers as the Chinese pi-pa player Wu Man, the Canadian fiddler Ashley MacIsaac, and the Greek vocalist Eleftheria Arvanitaki. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 4 and Oct. 6-8 at 7:30.)

JUILLIARD SCHOOL CENTENARY
The country's paramount conservatory for the arts begins its centennial celebrations with two orchestral concerts. Oct. 6 at 8: Two noted composers from Canada—Randolph Peters and the Pulitzer Prize-winning Michael Colgrass—will enjoy performances of their works conducted by James DePreist, who also leads the Juilliard Symphony in Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Harp and Debussy's "La Mer." (Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, Juilliard School. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.) ♦ Oct. 11 at 8: Dennis Russell Davies conducts the Juilliard Orchestra in the official hundredth-birthday program, an evening of works by Schubert (the Symphony No. 9, the "Great"), Webern (the Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6), and the world première of "Manhattan Trilogy," by Einojuhani Rautavaara, a major Finnish composer who studied at Juilliard as a young man. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
James Levine, beginning his second season at the B.S.O. with the same mixture of high modernism

and high glamour that he brought to his first, brings the group to Carnegie Hall to perform the New York première of Elliott Carter's "Three Illusions," Lukas Foss's "Time Cycle" (with the soprano Dawn Upshaw), Ives's "Three Places in New England," and Gershwin's Concerto in F (with the pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet). (212-247-7800. Oct. 10 at 8.)

RECITALS

SYMPHONY SPACE: "POWERKEYS"
Two prizewinning young pianists—Tanya Bannister and Winston Choi—offer an evening of world-première solo works by David Del Tredici, Suzanne Farrin, and Gordon Beeferman. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Oct. 6 at 7:30.)

MILLER THEATRE
George Steel's annual mixture of new music and old music in new contexts begins at Columbia University. Oct. 6 at 8: In "Two Pianos," Dennis Russell Davies and Maki Namekawa team up for Messiaen's ecstatic "Visions de l'Amen," Kurtág's "Three Bach Transciptions," and a new suite of excerpts from Glass's dance opera "Les Enfants Terribles." ♦ Oct. 7 at 8: With works like the notorious "Ballet Mécanique," George Antheil established a reputation as an avant-garde troublemaker in the nineteen-twenties, then gradually eased himself into more accessible modes of composition. Daniel Spalding's Philadelphia Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra offers a selection that includes the Piano Concerto No. 2, from 1926 (featuring Guy Livingston), and "Dreams," a ballet from 1935 composed for George Balanchine. (Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799.)

"WHITNEY LIVE"
The Whitney Museum of American Art is giving the Metropolitan Museum some competition as a concert venue—an appropriate move, since Gertrude Whitney was a major supporter of the "ultramodern" composers of the nineteen-twenties. The rock band Print, the horn group Tilt, and the mix-master DJ Spooky will present their versions of Varèse's "Ionisation" and "Hyperprism" and Ruggles's "Angels," among other works. (Madison Ave. at 75th St. 212-570-3676. Oct. 7 at 7.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
The Guarneri String Quartet offers works by Haydn (the "Sunrise" Quartet), Mozart (the Viola Quintet in C Major, with Scott St. John), and Ravel. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Oct. 8 at 8.)

"DAYS OF AWE: ISAAC BOUND"
The 92nd Street Y begins the season with an interdisciplinary event offering works on the story of Abraham and Isaac by Charpentier, Britten, and Rossi (performed by the tenor William Ferguson and the Blue Heron Renaissance Choir, among others) interwoven with commentaries by such experts as Helen Evans, a curator of medieval art at the Met. Sanford Sylvan is the music director. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 9 at 3.)

"VIRGIL FOX LEGACY"
Fox, who reigned with E. Power Biggs as the most famous organist in America, was nothing if not flamboyant, and a commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death will be done in style. In the grand finale, Fox, in the midst of a recital by David Ogletree, makes an appearance of sorts, "playing" a Bach trio sonata by means of the "note recognition" software inside Trinity Church's new Marshall & Ogletree organ, which can reproduce Fox's unique touch. (Broadway at Wall St. Oct. 10 at 1. No tickets required. For full listing of concerts, see www.virgilfoxlegacy.com.)

MOVIES OPENING

BEFORE THE FALL
Set in Berlin in 1942, Dennis Gansel's film tells the story of an amateur boxer (Max Riemelt) who enters a Nazi school, where he resists the party line. In German. Opening Oct. 7. (Quad Cinema.)

DANDELION
In a drama directed by Mark Milgard, a troubled Idaho teen (Vincent Kartheiser) falls for the new girl in town (Taryn Manning). With Arliss Howard and Mare Winningham. Opening Oct. 7. (Sunshine Cinema.)

GOOD NIGHT, AND GOOD LUCK
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 7. (In wide release.)

IN HER SHOES
Curtis Hanson directed this drama based on the novel by Jennifer Weiner, about two very different sisters, a party girl (Cameron Diaz) and an uptight attorney (Toni Collette). With Shirley MacLaine. Opening Oct. 7. (In wide release.)

NEVER BEEN THAWED
A comedy about a quirky group of friends, including a frozen-dinner collector and members of a Christian band. Directed by Sean Anders. Opening Oct. 7. (Cinema Village.)

THE SQUID AND THE WHALE
Noah Baumbach wrote and directed this drama, set in Brooklyn in 1986, about two boys (Jesse Eisenberg and Owen Kline) who must deal with the breakup of their parents (Jeff Daniels and Laura Linney). Opening Oct. 5. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TWO FOR THE MONEY
Al Pacino plays a sports consultant who recruits a former college football player (Matthew McConaughey) for his uncanny game-predicting ability, involving him in the high-stakes world of sports gambling. With Rene Russo and Jeremy Piven. Directed by D. J. Caruso. Opening Oct. 7. (In wide release.)

WAITING
Rob McKittrick wrote and directed this comedy, about a group of young employees at a restaurant called Shenanigan's. Opening Oct. 7. (In wide release.)

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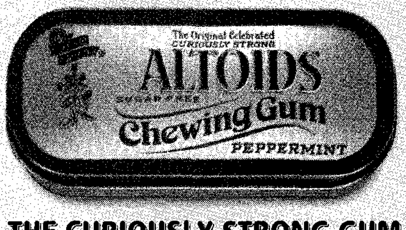

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WALLACE & GROMIT: THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT
An animated comedy, in which Wallace and his dog, Gromit, must prevent a mysterious attacker from sabotaging the annual giant-vegetable contest. Directed by Nick Park and Steve Box. Opening Oct. 5. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

CAPOTE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

THE CONSTANT GARDENER
In this frenzied adaptation of a John le Carré novel, Ralph Fiennes plays a refined but bumbling British diplomat who arrives in Kenya with his belligerent new wife (Rachel Weisz). Impatient with niceties, she goes after the pharmaceutical giants, who are testing a new drug and covering up the results. When she dies, apparently in an accident, her loving and uncomprehending husband is forced to retrace her steps and rekindle some of her fire. The movie is a curious, roiling mix of genres that stirs marital romance into a heated indictment of a vast, conspiratorial crime. The director is Fernando Meirelles, who has imported the busy style of his last picture, "City of God," and given it an extra jolt; the images of Africa, forever in hot pursuit of one another, leave you not so much exhilarated as exhausted, long before the story is done. With Danny Huston and a mischievous Bill Nighy.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/5/05.) (In wide release.)

EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED
As Jonathan Safran Foer, the repressed Jewish novelist in the making who goes in search of his roots in Ukraine, Elijah Wood is inhumanly neat and wears big glasses in front of his extraordinary blue eyes. Many things are off in Liev Schreiber's first directorial effort, an adaptation of the novel by Foer (who named the main character after himself). The movie veers from slapstick to tragedy to shimmering wonder-of-life euphoria, not always successfully, and Schreiber can't bring the material to a satisfying dramatic climax. But there are affecting moments, too, as Jonathan wanders through the countryside with two unreliable guides from Odessa—Alex (Eugene Hutz), an Americanophile lout, and his irascible grandfather (Boris Leskin), who has buried roots of his own. Shot in Prague and its environs, doubling for Ukraine.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

FLIGHTPLAN
Jodie Foster stars as a grief-stricken aeronautical engineer travelling home to New York with her six-year-old daughter to bury her husband. When she awakes after a short nap and finds her child gone, none of the other passengers remember seeing the little girl, and it's up to Foster, in perfect closeup, to act up a storm and demand action. With gliding camerawork and amazing production design (the two-story aircraft was built by Alexander Hammond), the director, Robert Schwentke, gives Foster plenty of room in which to panic. But the film is seriously underwritten (even at ninety minutes) and devolves into a ludicrous finale.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE
David Cronenberg's latest is a noirish story about a seemingly settled Indiana man, Tom Stall (Viggo Mortensen), who displays an unsuspected talent for violence when a couple of killers invade the café he runs in a small town. Soon after, a mobster from Philadelphia with a glass eye (Ed Harris) shows up and addresses Tom as "Joey." Is some sort of buried past taking over Tom's life? The movie asks us to believe that one man can carry two entirely different personalities within him and still be as sane as daylight. Cronenberg's direction, mirroring the split in Tom, is alternately measured and frighteningly explosive, and, as always, he gives the movie a nasty underlay of sexual perversity. With Maria Bello, Ashton Holmes, and, as still another Philadelphia mobster, William Hurt, who seems to be having a ball.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

DVD NOTES
GET HITCHED

In addition to such acknowledged masterworks as "Vertigo," "Psycho," and "The Birds," **"Alfred Hitchcock: The Masterpiece Collection"** (Universal), a new treasure chest of fourteen of Hitchcock's films, contains several others that are their equals, including "Shadow of a Doubt," his 1955 remake of "The Man Who Knew Too Much," and one that has them beat.

"Marnie," released in 1964, is Hitchcock's most underrated film, as much because of its flaws as because of its virtues. The plot is far thinner than those in most of his films: Marnie Edgar (Tippi Hedren) is a kleptomaniac, and Mark Rutland (Sean Connery) is the boss from whom she steals. He has hired her fully aware of her weakness around money because he lusts after her. Here, and only here, Hitchcock, the meticulous master, filmed like a man in the grasp of uncontrollable emotion: he may have been in awe of Grace Kelly (whom he had wanted for the role), but he was erotically obsessed with Hedren, and filmed her with a pained fixity, often at oddly skewed angles, as if he wanted to avert his eyes. Hedren, who is not an accomplished actress, is nonetheless an astonishing presence: she stares into the camera with a cold, defiant glare that seems to have brought the spurned Hitchcock a masochistic pleasure. The film's resolution does nothing to dispel an uncanny chill that suggests, more than in any other film by Hitchcock, a world out of joint.

Less profound and more capricious, "Saboteur," from 1942, was Hitchcock's first thriller set in America, and he used a range of locations from California to New York to run loopily through the gamut of genres. In brief set pieces, he takes on the blue-collar drama, the Western, Tod Browning's "Freaks," the high-society melodrama, and the urban police story. The convoluted plot, concerning a group of Fascist-sympathizing terrorists, is set in motion by an ill-timed leer at a female colleague by a defense worker, Barry Kane (Robert Cummings), who is mistaken for a perpetrator and must go on the lam to catch the real one. The final scene, atop the Statue of Liberty, features a moment of pure, nightmarish horror more frightening than anything Hitchcock would film until "Psycho": yet here, in keeping with the tone of the film, he leavens the shock with a comically surreal triviality.

—*Richard Brody*

JUST LIKE HEAVEN

Reese Witherspoon is clever and sprightly in this pseudo-romantic comedy about a woman in a coma who's suspended between life and the afterlife. Mark Ruffalo plays a lonely architect who is haunted by her when he sublets her apartment. The typical Odd Couple high jinks happily ensue, until the film turns disastrously into a right-to-life-support polemic. The director Mark Waters, who did nice work on "Freaky Friday" and "Mean Girls," moves the film along with flair, but the uneasy subtext (does anyone want to see a comedy about the Terri Schiavo case?) drains the fun out of it.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

LORD OF WAR

A raffish, visually exciting entertainment about the rise of an arms dealer. Nicolas Cage, speaking in a new, self-confident voice, is Yuri Orlov, a Ukrainian-born hustler who grew up in Brighton Beach (he pretends to be a Jew when it's useful) and who then claws his way to the top of a sordid trade. Yuri easily bribes Soviet-made weaponry out of the hands of the military and then sells the guns and grenades to crumb-bum Third World dictators. He has a stake in African civil strife, a grotesque situation that the writer-director Andrew Niccol plays as exuberant black comedy. The movie is glib and over-explicit but also, in its cynical way, honest and morally outraged. With Bridget Moynahan as Yuri's fantasy bride, Jared Leto as his hysterical brother, and Ian Holm as a "moral" arms dealer—he sells to the good guys rather than to the dictators.—*D.D.* (9/26/05) (In wide release.)

OLIVER TWIST

If you had to pick a director to make something new of Dickens's tale, Roman Polanski would be an obvious choice. His own early history, and the record of his films, seems rife with the required anxieties. All the more disappointing, then, that the outcome should verge on the staid. This Oliver (Barney Clark) looks angelic but stunned, and the menace purveyed by his various nemeses, including Mr. Bumble (Jeremy Swift) and even Fagin (Ben Kingsley), has a mild and manageable air. The novel works on you as unshakably as a bad dream, but such creeping fears descend on the film only with the arrival of Bill Sikes (Jamie Foreman) and Nancy (Leanne Rowe). Their kinship is an abusive parody of love, and its climax is suitably dire; mind you, when it comes to the bloody detail—Bill's dog yelping in a corner while Nancy is clubbed to death—Polanski simply picks the pockets of David Lean's version from 1948. If you crave concentrated Dickens, that deep-shadowed, offensive masterwork is still the one to catch.—*A.L.* (10/3/05) (In wide release.)

PICKPOCKET

The nimble crime of the title, perfected by a fiercely philosophical outlaw (Martin LaSalle), is itself a work of art, and Robert Bresson, in his 1959 film, reveals it, in all of its varieties, as a furtive street ballet. The story begins with money changing hands, and throughout the film, Bresson burns into memory the clink of coins and the crumple of bills. The film is modelled on "Crime and Punishment": the criminal, Michel, jousts verbally (with phrases from the novel) with a cagey police inspector to assert his own superiority to the law, and crosses paths with a drunkard's toiling, spiritual daughter, Jeanne (Marika Green). Bresson, filming nonactors in images of austere precision, also evokes the novel's emotional extremes: torment and exaltation, nihilistic fury and religious passion. But "Pickpocket" is above all a love story, about the miracle of redemptive love and its price in humility and unconditional surrender. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum; Oct. 7-11.)

PROOF

Catherine (Gwyneth Paltrow) appears to have inherited the mathematical gifts of her father, Robert (Anthony Hopkins). The question is, has he also handed down his fragility of mind? The kinship of brilliance and madness is not exactly the freshest topic for investigation, and John Madden's film, adapted from David Auburn's play, doesn't bring much to the party. There is suspense, of a kind, when a new mathematical proof of startling ambition—and uncertain provenance—is found in Robert's desk after his death, but apart from that the movie unfolds in a mood of worrisome glumness. When Catherine's nongeeky sister Claire (Hope Davis) arrives from New York for the funeral, we are meant to find her mean and brittle, but there is much to be said for her exasperation, and, as is so often the case, what struck theatre audiences as smart and provoking winds up onscreen looking smug. With Jake Gyllenhaal as a math graduate and part-time drummer, who would be well advised not to give up his day job.—*A.L.* (9/19/05) (In wide release.)

REAL GENIUS

The fifteen-year-old freshman (Gabriel Jarret), the gonzo senior (Val Kilmer), and the other budding geniuses at Pacific Tech learn that all science and no philosophy makes Jack a dangerous boy. A professor with a secret C.I.A. contract is using these brainiacs to develop a giant laser-powered ray gun that can zap human targets from outer space. Luckily, the director, Martha Coolidge, has the sense to embed morals within her farce. This antiauthoritarian youth comedy from 1985 has a refreshingly light touch. We know that an icy, charismatic academic (William Atherton) is a bad guy because he hates dogs, laborers, anyone with an I.Q. under 135, and popcorn. And Kilmer proves what a deft comedian he can be. For his version of an adolescent rebel, the repartee's never over—every time he exhales, another effrontery pops out. The cinematographer, Vilmos Zsigmond, brings out peerless flesh tones even in shadowy conference rooms, a murky lab, and a messy dorm.—*Michael Sragow* (Sunshine Cinema; Oct. 7-8.)

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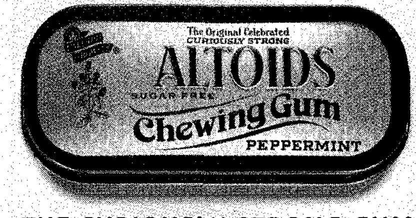

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ROLL BOUNCE
In Chicago in 1978, Xavier (X) Smith (Bow Wow) and his crew of South Side roller-demons compete in a skate-off challenge against the North Side idol Sweetness (Wesley Jonathan) and his polyester posse. The director, Malcolm D. Lee, offers a nostalgic view of the village that it takes to raise a child and the hard work needed to keep a family together. A pair of tough and tender scenes between X and his widowed father, Curtis (Chi McBride), are so tear-jerkingly effective that they render the skating contest anticlimactic. Yet, for a film that celebrates the value of work, there's no sense of the self-imposed discipline of rehearsal required to make it to the top. Endearing actors (including Mike Epps and Charlie Murphy as wisecracking trash collectors), a funny script, and a mood of bittersweet sentiment are undercut by simplistic resolutions.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

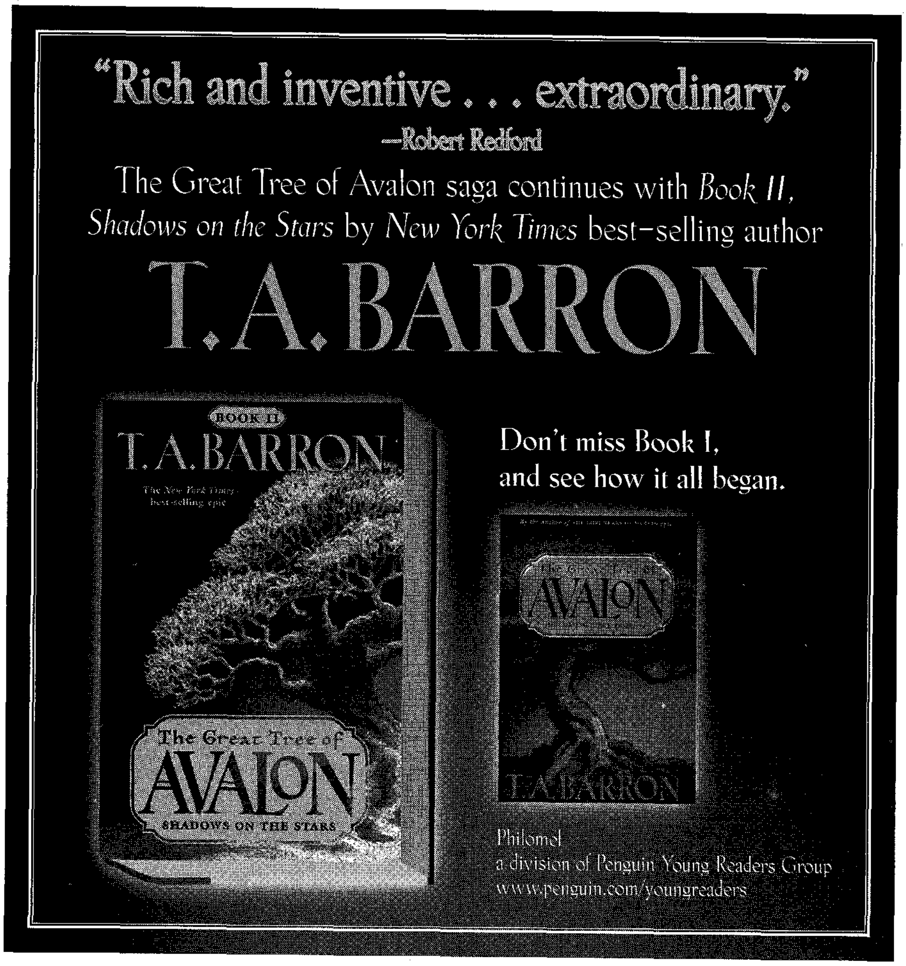
SERPICO
Al Pacino as Frank Serpico, the New York City policeman whose incorruptibility alienated him from his fellow-officers and turned him into a messianic hippie freak. The theme is richly comic, and the film is great fun, even though it sacrifices Serpico's story—one of the rare hopeful stories of the time—for a cynical, downbeat finish. Norman Wexler is responsible for most of the hip humor; he writes virulent lowlife dialogue with a demented lift. The screenplay is by Waldo Salt and Wexler, based on the book by Peter Maas. Directed, sloppily but effectively, by Sidney Lumet—he sends the comic lines across. The picture has a cartoon stridency, and the laughter isn't deep or lasting, but it's good and rude, and there's lots of it. Released in 1973.—*Pauline Kael* (Moving Image; Oct. 5.)

THUMBSUCKER
Justin (Lou Pucci), a pale, slender seventeen-year-old, withdraws from his dissatisfied mom (Tilda Swinton), his inarticulate, self-disappointed father (Vincent D'Onofrio), and just about everyone at school by hoisting his thumb and dreaming. Mike Mills, working with Walter Kirn's 1999 novel, has contributed yet another movie to the coming-of-age genre, but Mills's gentle touch brings out the humor and hidden tensions in the undramatic material. Vince Vaughn, Keanu Reeves, and Benjamin Bratt give amusing performances as stumbling adults who don't provide Justin with much in the way of role models.—*D.D.* (9/26/05) (In wide release.)

TIM BURTON'S CORPSE BRIDE
Tim Burton returns with another stop-motion-animation movie that's both beautiful and a bit disturbing to watch. The nineteenth-century period piece, about a shy and clumsy pianist (voiced by Johnny Depp) who accidentally becomes engaged to a dead woman (Helena Bonham Carter) longing for love, is darkly designed in script and in production, and thoroughly intriguing. After the Corpse Bride drags the pianist to the spectacularly colorful Land of the Dead, the remainder of the film, about his escape from the underworld, is both poignant and exciting. A gothic comedy about Victorian repression may not be the most welcoming of kids' fare, but there's a verve and effervescence to the movie that plays like a musical version of an Edgar Allan Poe story, and Danny Elfman's fanciful score is a blast. Co-directed by Mike Johnson.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BALZAC AND THE LITTLE CHINESE SEAMSTRESS: Cinema Village. **FORTY SHADES OF BLUE:** Film Forum. **THE FORTY-YEAR-OLD VIRGIN:** In wide release (9/12/05). **GRIZZLY MAN:** In wide release (8/8 & 15/05). **LITTLE MANHATTAN:** In wide release. **MARCH OF THE PENGUINS:** In wide release (9/12/05). **THE PRIZE WINNER OF DEFIANCE, OHIO:** In wide release.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ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—“Attention: Light!” Oct. 5 at 7: Short films by Paul Sharits and Josef Robakowski (1966-2004). ♦ Première. Oct. 5-9 at 9: “The Rodnees: We Mod Like Dat!” (2005, Lindley Farley). ♦ “The Walking Picture Palace,” films curated by Mark McElhatten. Oct. 6 at 7: Short films by Ken Jacobs (2005). ♦ Oct. 6 at 9: A program of short films (1981-2005). ♦ Oct. 10 at 7 and 9: A program of short films (1967-2005). ♦ Oct. 11 at 7 and 9: A program of short films (1978-2005). ♦ Oct. 11 at 9: A program of short films (2004-05). ♦ “Logos Film Lectures.” Oct. 7-8 at 7 and 9:30, Oct. 8 at 1 (followed by a talk by Stephen Eric Bronner), and Oct. 9 at 6 and 9:30: “The Battle of Algiers” (1965, Gillo Pontecorvo; in French, English, and Arabic). ♦ “Wild Walls New York.” Oct. 7 at 7: A program of short films on architecture by Helen Levitt, Shirley Clarke, and others (1952-65). ♦ Oct. 8 at 6: A program of films by Rudy Burckhardt (1940-76). ♦ Oct. 9 at 6: A program of films by Rudy Burckhardt (1975-95). ♦ Special screening. Oct. 9 at 3: “A Berlin Lost” (1982-84; Richard Kostelanetz and Martin Koerber).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through Oct. 6: “Double Dutch.” Oct. 5 at 6:50 and 9:15: “Diva Dolorosa” (1999, Peter Delpeut; in Dutch). ♦ Oct. 6 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: “Felice . . . Felice . . .” (1998, Delpeut; in Dutch and Japanese). ♦ “Call for Change: Third World Newsreel Presents.” Oct. 7 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: “The Healing Passage” (2004, S. Pearl Sharp). ♦ Oct. 8 at 2 and 6:50: “All Power to the People!” (1970-71, Third World Newsreel). ♦ Oct. 8 at 4:30 and 9:15: “The Immigrant Experience,” a program of short films. ♦ Oct. 9 at 2 and 6:50: “Newsreel in NYC,” a program of short films. ♦ Oct. 9 at 4:30 and 9:15: “Raise Your Voice,” a program of short films. ♦ “Zhang Yimou Triad.” Oct. 10 at 7 and 9:30: “Raise the Red Lantern” (1991; in Mandarin). ♦ Oct. 11 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: “The Story of Qiu Ju” (1992; in Mandarin).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Oct. 5-6 at 2, 5:30, and 8:30: “Once Upon a Time in the West” (1968, Sergio Leone). ♦ Oct. 5-11 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: “Samurai Rebellion” (1967, Masaki Kobayashi; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 7-11 at 2, 3:40, 5:30, 7, 8:40, and 10:15: “Pickpocket” (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—“Cinéma Tuesdays.” Oct. 11 at 12:30 and 6:30: “The Woman Next Door” (1981, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ Oct. 11 at 3:30 and 9: “The Last Metro” (1980, Truffaut; in French and German).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—“Weekend Classics.” Oct. 7-10 at noon: “Stolen Kisses” (1968, François Truffaut; in French) and “Antoine and Colette” (1962, Truffaut; in French). ♦ “Waverly Midnights.” Oct. 7-9: “Gimme Shelter” (1970, Albert and David Maysles). ♦ “Stranger Than Fiction,” a documentary series. Oct. 11 at 8: “Street Fight” (2005, Marshall Curry).

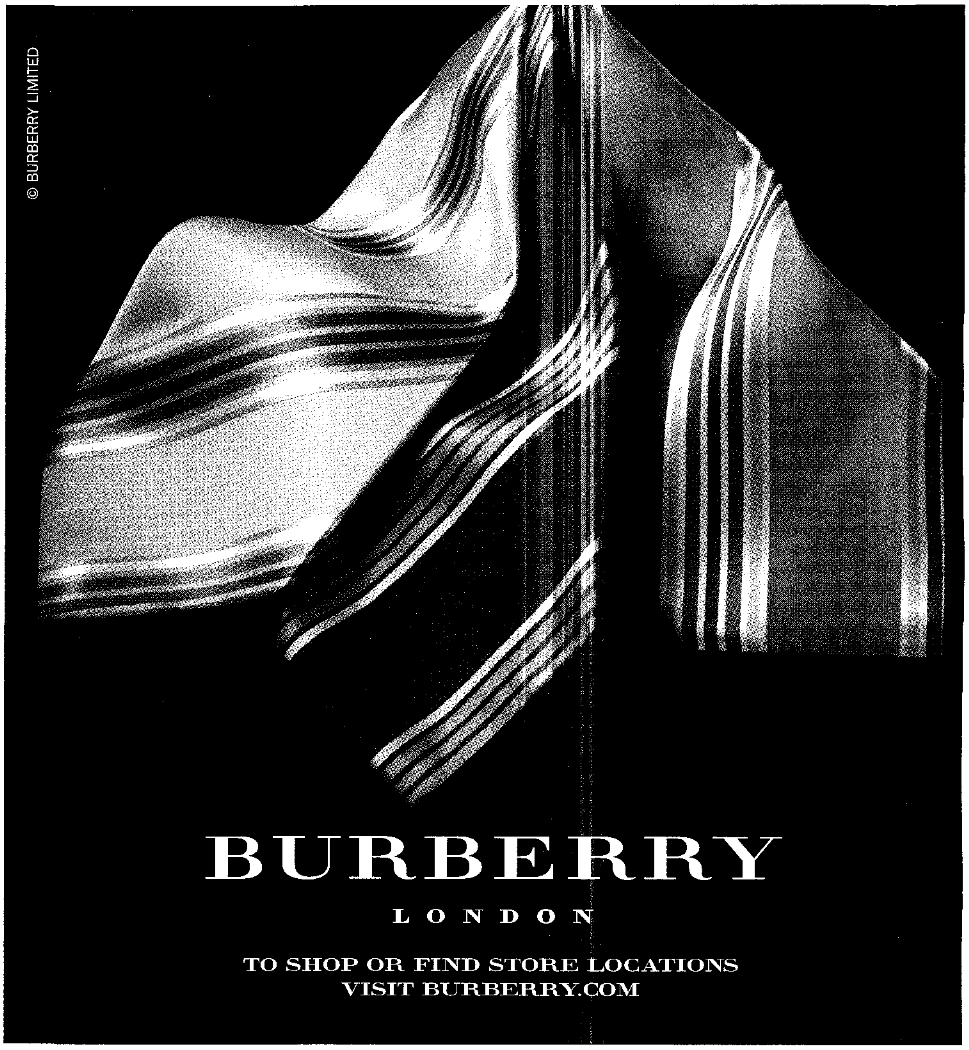
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—“Early Autumn: Masterworks of Japanese Cinema from the National Film Center, Tokyo.” All films are in Japanese. Oct. 5 at 6: “Sisters of the Gion” (1936, Kenji Mizoguchi). ♦ Oct. 5 at 8 and Oct. 8 at 2: “Ototo” (1960, Kon Ichikawa). ♦ Oct. 6 at 8:30 and Oct. 9 at 2: “Where Chimneys Are Seen” (1953, Heinosuke Gosho). ♦ Oct. 9 at 4:15: “Ino and Mon” (1936, Sotoji Kimura). ♦ Oct. 9 at 5:30: “Not Long After Leaving Shinegawa”

(1957, Yuzo Kawashima). ♦ Oct. 10 at 4: "Wild Geese" (1953, Shiro Toyoda). ♦ Oct. 10 at 8:30: "Ghost Story of Yotsuya" (1959, Nobuo Nakagawa). ♦ "Reviewed: Michael Snow." Oct. 5 at 8:30: "Corpus Callosum" (2002, Michael Snow). ♦ " 'Swoon': Ten Years of Killer Films." Oct. 6 at 6:30: "Postcards from America" (1994, Steve McLean). ♦ Oct. 6 at 8:30: "Go Fish" (1994, Rose Troche). ♦ Oct. 7 at 6:15: "Velvet Goldmine" (1998, Todd Haynes). ♦ Oct. 7 at 8:45: "Poison" (1991, Haynes). ♦ Oct. 8 at 4: "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" (2001, John Cameron Mitchell). ♦ Oct. 8 at 6: "Swoon" (1992, Tom Kalin). ♦ Oct. 8 at 8:30: "Boys Don't Cry" (1999, Kimberly Peirce). ♦ "British Advertising Broadcast Awards 2005." Oct. 7 at 6 and Oct. 10 at 6:30: A program of award-winning British commercials. ♦ Through Oct. 23: "Rebels with a Cause: The Cinema of East Germany." All films are in German. Oct. 7 at 8 and Oct. 9 at 2: "Her Third" (1972, Egon Günther). ♦ Oct. 8 at 2: "The Architects" (1990, Peter Kahane). ♦ Oct. 8 at 4: "The Bicycle" (1981, Evelyne Schmidt). ♦ Oct. 8 at 6: "The Legend of Paul and Paula" (1973, Heiner Carow). ♦ Oct. 8 at 8:30: "The Second Track" (1962, Joachim Kunert). ♦ Oct. 9 at 5: "Carbide and Sorrel" (1963, Frank Beyer). ♦ Oct. 10 at 4: "The Rabbit Is Me" (1965, Kurt Maetzig). ♦ Oct. 10 at 6:30: "Mother" (1958, Manfred Weckwerth).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—An evening with Sidney Lumet. Oct. 5 at 7: "Serpico" (†), followed by a dialogue with Lumet. ♦ An evening with Atom Egoyan. Oct. 7 at 7: "Where the Truth Lies" (2005, Atom Egoyan), followed by a discussion with Egoyan, the actress Alison Lohman, and the producer Robert Lantos. ♦ Repertory nights. Oct. 7-8 at 7:30 and Oct. 9 at 6:30: "The Seven Samurai" (1954, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Through Nov. 13: "Some Like It Wilder: The Complete Billy Wilder." Oct. 8 at 2: "Love in the Afternoon" (1957). ♦ Oct. 8-9 at 4:30: "Sabrina" (1954). ♦ Oct. 9 at 2: "Avanti!" (1972).

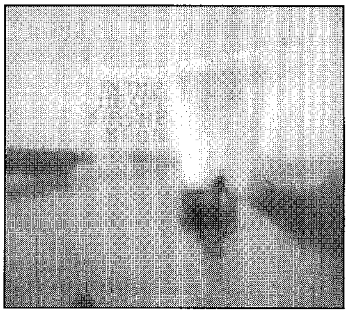
THE NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL
Lincoln Center (212-875-5050)—Most screenings will be held at Alice Tully Hall. See www.filmlinc.com for details. Oct. 5 at 6 and Oct. 6 at 9: "Three Times" (2005, Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Mandarin and Taiwanese). ♦ Oct. 5 at 8:30: "Beyond the Rocks" (1922, Sam Woods; silent). ♦ Oct. 5 at 9 and Oct. 6 at 6: "Paradise Now" (2005, Hany Abu-Assad; in Arabic). ♦ Oct. 7 at 6 and Oct. 8 at noon: "Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story" (2005, Michael Winterbottom). ♦ Oct. 7 at 9: "Gabrielle" (2005, Patrice Chéreau; in French). ♦ Oct. 8 at 3: "The Sun" (2005, Aleksandr Sokurov; in Russian). ♦ Oct. 8 at 6: "The Passenger" (1975, Michelangelo Antonioni). ♦ Oct. 9 at 8:30: "Hidden" (2005, Michael Haneke; in French). ♦ Sidebar to the New York Film Festival: "The Beauty of the Everyday: Japan's Shochiku Company at 110." All films are in Japanese. Oct. 5 at 2 and 6:15: "The Most Beautiful Day of My Life" (1948, Kozaburo Yoshimura). ♦ Oct. 5 at 4 and Oct. 8 at 2:15: "Scandal" (1950, Akira Kurosawa). ♦ Oct. 6 at 1:15 and 7:15: "No Advice Today" (1950, Minoru Shibuya). ♦ Oct. 6 at 3:15 and 9:10: "Carmen Comes Home" (1951, Keisuke Kinoshita). ♦ Oct. 6 at 5: "Jirokichi" (1952, Daisuke Ito). ♦ Oct. 7 at 1 and 7:10: "Naked Youth" (1960, Nagisa Oshima). ♦ Oct. 7 at 3 and 9:10: "Black River" (1957, Masaki Kobayashi). ♦ Oct. 7 at 5:15, Oct. 9 at 7:20, and Oct. 11 at 2: "Pale Flower" (1964, Masahiro Shinoda). ♦ Oct. 8 at 4:30: "Late Spring" (1949, Yasujiro Ozu). ♦ Oct. 8 at 6:45 and Oct. 9 at 2:15: "Night and Fog in Japan" (1960, Nagisa Oshima). ♦ Oct. 8 at 9 and Oct. 9 at noon: "Love Affair at Akitsu Spa" (1962, Kiju Yoshida). ♦ Oct. 9 at 4:30: "Face" (2000, Junji Sakamoto). ♦ Oct. 9 at 9:20 and Oct. 11 at 4: "Three Outlaw Samurai" (1964, Hideo Gosha).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Oct. 7-8: "Real Genius" (†).



Words on Music

Borders' World Music expert Chuck Hugener says:
"Two masterful virtuosos engage in an intricate and enthralling musical conversation. The delicate beauty and sunlit atmosphere they evoke is truly transporting."



NONESUCH

"Some of the finest improvised music one is ever likely to hear; playing of almost supernatural invention." –*The Independent (UK)*

**"★★★★★
An album of breathtaking instrumental sorcery...an African classic."
– *The Times (UK)***

A unique album of duets by **Ali Farka Touré** (guitar) and **Toumani Diabaté** (the harplike *kora*), two of Africa's greatest musicians. Recorded using a mobile studio in the Hotel Mandé on the banks of the Niger River in Bamako, Mali, it also features contributions from Ry Cooder.

BORDERS.

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Current Cinema." Oct. 9 at 4:45 and Oct. 11 at 8: "Hero" (2002, Zhang Yimou; in Mandarin). ♦ "Just Kidding!," films for children. Oct. 8 at 11 A.M. and 2: "Help! I'm a Fish" (2000, Stefan Fjeldmark, Michael Hegner, and Greg Manwaring).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—See New York Film Festival.

READINGS AND TALKS

SIDNEY LUMET
The legendary director talks with David Schwartz, the chief curator at the Museum of the Moving Image. Lumet's 1973 film, "Serpico," will be screened. (35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. 718-784-0077. Oct. 5 at 7.)

A TRIBUTE TO JUNE JORDAN
Adrienne Rich, Cornelius Eady, Joy Harjo, Yusef Komunyakaa, Jan Heller Levi, Donna Masini, and others honor the poet and activist. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628. Oct. 6 at 7:30.)

A TRIBUTE TO W. S. MERWIN
Lucille Clifton, Edward Hirsch, Naomi Shihab Nye, Gerald Stern, and other friends and poets join Merwin for an evening of his verse. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 10 at 8.)

JOSIP NOVAKOVICH
The Croatian-born author offers selections from his latest collection, "Infidelities: Stories of War and Lust." (192 Books, 192 Tenth Ave. For reservations, which are required, call 212-255-4022. Oct. 11 at 7.)

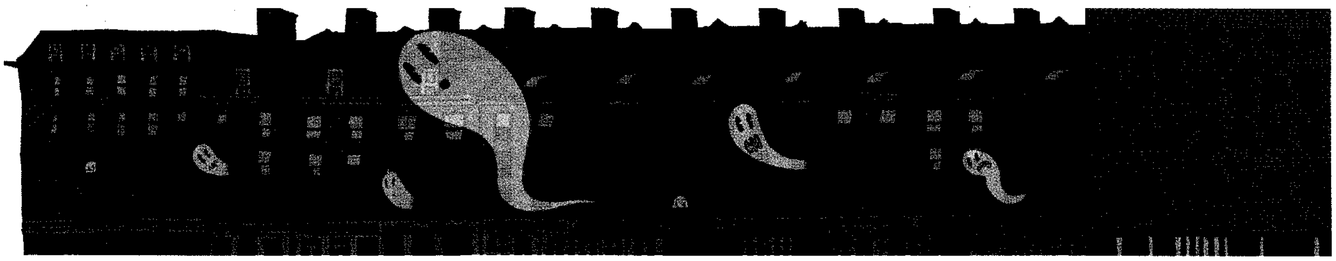
"NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND"
The French actor and director Patrice Chéreau gives a dramatic reading from Dostoyevsky's classic. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Oct. 11 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

A.E.S. CONVENTION
The annual gathering of the Audio Engineering Society doesn't typically draw members of the general public, but if you're considering transferring your CD collection permanently to an iPod or subscribing to a satellite-radio service, you might be interested in this year's public programs, which trace the history of innovation in the profession. Highlights follow. Oct. 7 at 5: A live radio drama produced by the legendary broadcaster Himan Brown. Oct. 9 at 1:30: A talk about the studios of New York City, featuring David Simons, the author of "Studio Stories: How the Great New York Records Were Made, from Miles to Madonna, Sinatra to the Ramones," Frank Laico, a longtime engineer with Columbia Records, the producer Brooks Arthur, and Walter Sear, the founder of the analog studio on West Forty-eighth Street that bears his name and is one of the city's oldest, among others. It will be moderated by the producer and engineer Elliot Mazer (Janis Joplin, Neil Young). Oct. 9 at 2: An appearance by Ray Dolby. Oct. 9 at 5:30: A talk about Major Armstrong, the inventor of FM radio, with Charles E. Sackermann, Jr., the owner of the world's first FM radio tower, in Alpine, New Jersey. (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. A limited number of tickets will be available to the general public at the A.E.S. Technical Tours desk in the lobby of the convention center. For more information about the event, which runs Oct. 7-10, visit www.aes.org.)

"OPEN HOUSE NEW YORK"
The words "Open House," at least among real-estate-obsessed New Yorkers, call to mind overpriced studios, crowds of slightly rude house-hunters, and bidding wars. Not so this weekend, when the notion of an open house takes on a completely different meaning. More than a hundred and fifty sites across the city that are ordinarily off limits will be open to the public, free of charge. These include the Grand Lodge of Masons, in Chelsea, the High Bridge Water Tower, in northern Manhattan, the Fresh Kills Landfill, in Staten Island, and the interior of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. (Oct. 8-9. For more information, visit www.ohny.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
"Chez Mondrian," André Kertész's photograph of the artist's meticulously kept apartment, from 1926, is both an homage to the painter and a masterpiece in its own right: the composition is coldly geometric, but the light, soft and inviting as it passes through an open doorway, infuses the space with warmth. A rare print of the image heads **Sotheby's** Oct. 10 sale of photos from the collection of Joseph and LaVerne Schieszler. On the following day, the house offers a general auction of photography, with stunning prints by Pierre Dubreuil ("The First Round," ca. 1932), Dorothea Lange ("White Angel Bread Line," from 1933), and Frederick Sommer ("Amputated Foot," from 1939). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Christie's**, too, will auction photographs on Oct. 10, in two sales—one from the collection of Gert Elfering, who took a particular interest in fashion and celebrity prints, the other a series of thirty-nine flower pictures by Mapplethorpe (including his famed calla-lily studies). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)



JASHAR AWAN

ON THE HORIZON

ABOVE AND BEYOND
THE OLD HOTEL
Oct. 21

The South Street Seaport Museum offers a rare tour of the preserved ruins of the Fulton Ferry Hotel, which was made famous by Joseph Mitchell's book "Up in the Old Hotel." (212-748-8735.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
FROM THE SHADOWS
Oct. 30

Nicolas Hodges, the virtuosic pianist (and actor) who was the best thing about Brian Ferneyhough's bizarre opera "Shadowlands," about Walter Benjamin, makes a less exotic appearance with James Levine and the Met Chamber Ensemble as the soloist in the New York première of Elliott Carter's "Dialogues for Piano and Orchestra." (212-247-7800.)

THE THEATRE
PURPLE REIGN
Nov. 1

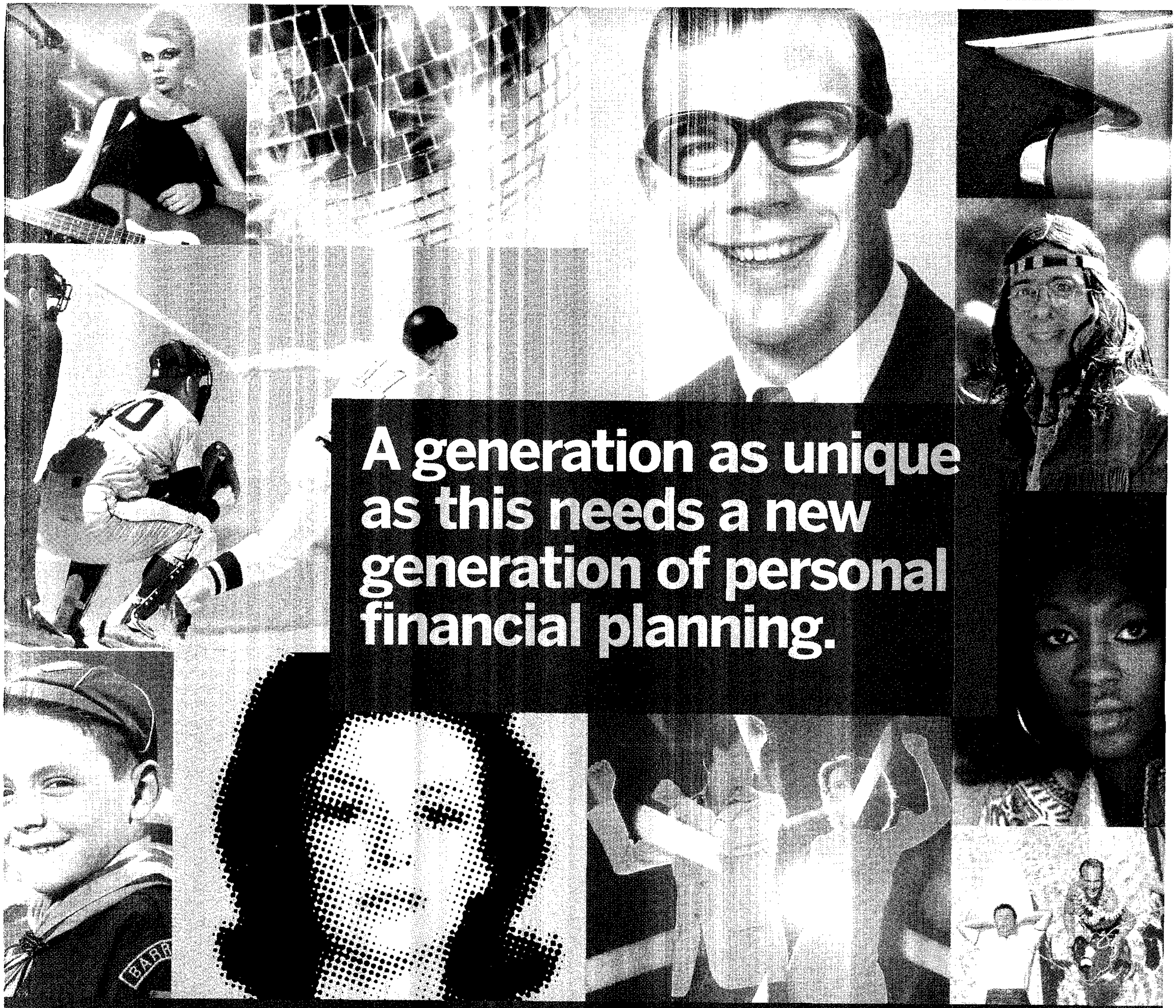
"The Color Purple" was originally a novel by Alice Walker, then a movie by Steven Spielberg; now it's a musical at the Broadway Theatre, with a book by Marsha Norman and music and lyrics by Brenda Russell, Allee Willis, and Stephen Bray. Oprah Winfrey, who starred in the Spielberg film, recently joined the musical's production team. (212-239-6200.)

ART
ON THE WAY UP
Nov. 9-March 12

The Studio Museum in Harlem's "Frequency" will present the work of thirty-four black emerging artists from around the United States, including Adam Pendelton, Michael Queenland (an artist-in-residence at the museum this year), William Villalongo, and Robert A. Pruitt. (212-864-4500.)

NIGHT LIFE
COUNTRY COMFORTS
Nov. 14

The Grand Ole Opry turns eighty this year, and to celebrate the occasion, the venerable country-music institution is making a rare trip to New York, with a concert in Carnegie Hall that features Trace Adkins, Vince Gill, Alison Krauss, Brad Paisley, Alan Jackson, and Trisha Yearwood. The show takes place on the eve of the Country Music Awards, which are being held at Madison Square Garden for the first time in the awards' nearly forty-year history. (212-247-7800.)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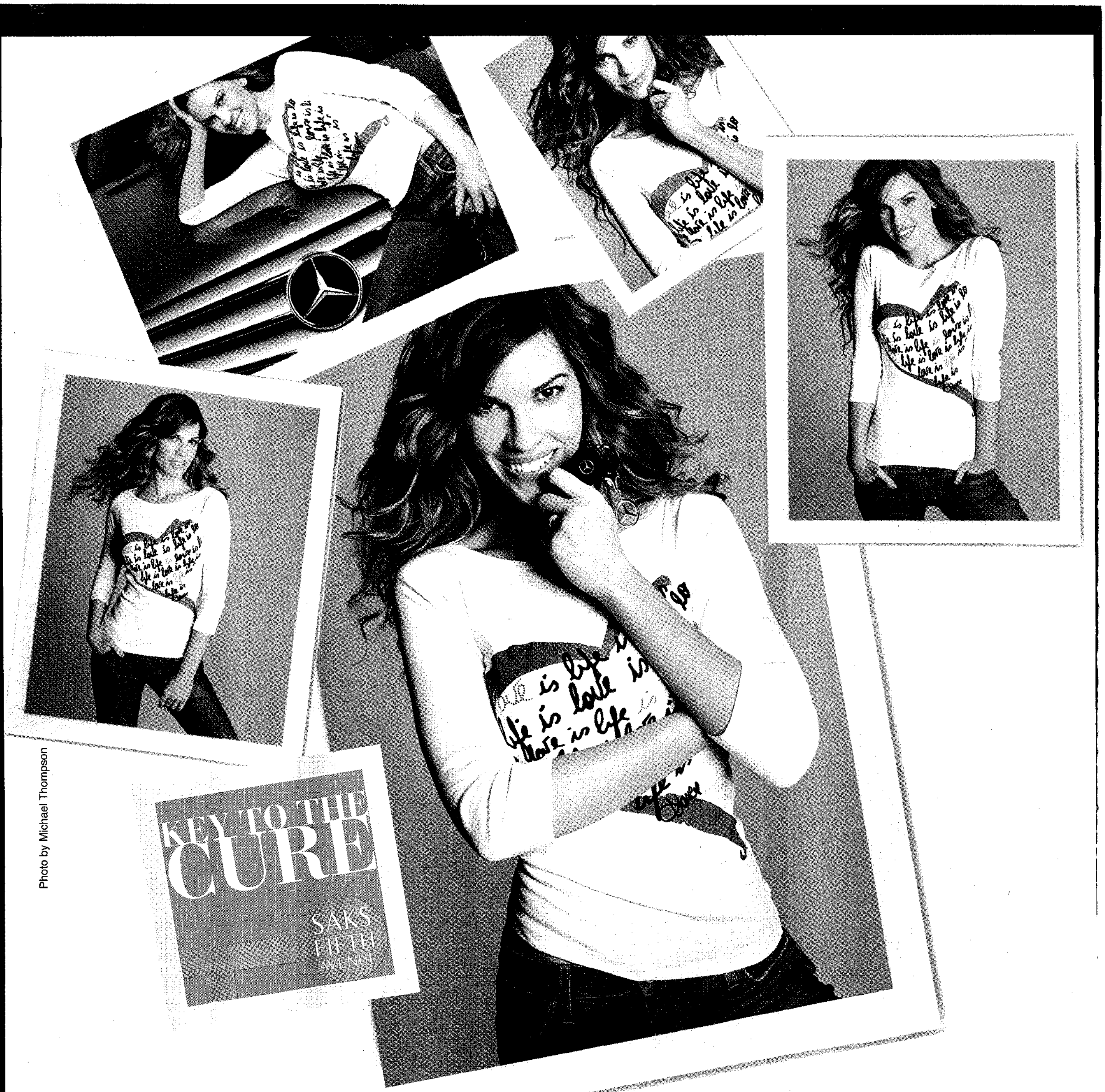

Photo by Michael Thompson

KEY TO THE CURE

OCTOBER 28 AND 29

Join Saks Fifth Avenue for our annual shopping event to support Key To The Cure, a charitable initiative to fight women's cancers.

A percentage of sales up to $1 million will be donated to local and national women's cancer charities through the Women's Cancer Research Fund, a program of the Entertainment Industry Foundation. To order the limited edition T-shirt designed by Diane von Furstenberg, or for more information about this event, call 888.771.2323 or visit saks.com. Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC will make a generous donation of $1 million to Saks Fifth Avenue's Key To The Cure through the sale of 750 Signature Edition R-Class vehicles. Special thanks to Hilary Swank, the 2005 Ambassador for EIF's Women's Cancer Research Fund and Saks Fifth Avenue's Key To The Cure.

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SAKS
FIFTH
AVENUE

Mercedes-Benz

THE
NEW YORKER

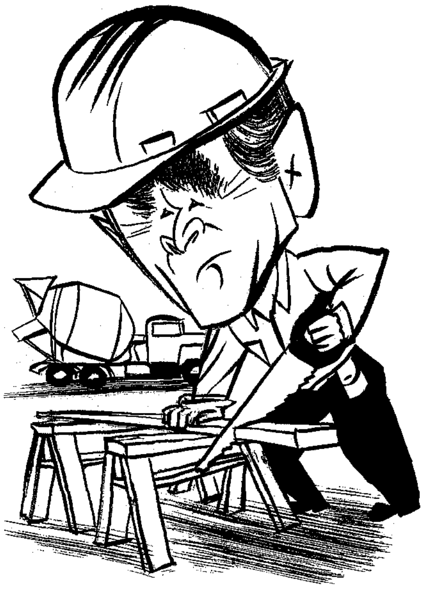
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
REBUILDING

The prospect of rebuilding New Orleans is turning into a Rorschach test that reveals more about people's preconceptions and predilections than about what will make the city work again. When President Bush strode across a klieg-lit Jackson Square to make his televised speech about rebuilding the city, he was obviously trying to rebuild his own reputation as well, and he was at pains to appear at once commanding, empathetic, tough-minded, and generous. Conservatives and deficit hawks went into shock over the amount he was proposing to spend—$51.8 billion—and liberals were momentarily placated because he had finally signalled that he sees evidence of race and class problems in the disaster, and had taken compassionate-conservative rhetoric out of the basement storage bin where it has been for the past few years (he even used the term "wounded healers"). It was as if his actual ideas—Republican bromides about tax relief, giving federal land away to individuals, and promoting private charity—were beside the point. What mattered were his feelings.

Maybe the President is right that in the long run the genius of individual enterprise will bring New Orleans back, but in the short run the city needs things that only government can provide, like public health and safety. Even Calvin Coolidge sent somebody to take charge of New Orleans when it was flooded. Bush, however, evidently feels that directing water through, under, and around cities—a kingly function since ancient times—is best left to the locals. Not everyone agrees, of course: while New Orleans went back under water, the country was conducting a seminar.

Louisiana's Senator Mary Landrieu, a Democrat, proposed a Hurricane Katrina Disaster Relief and Economic Recovery Act (her fellow Louisiana senator, David Vitter, a Republican, is a co-sponsor), which is intended to show up Bush's plan as pathetically inadequate. It would spend $250 billion, in ways that would fulfill the dreams of just about everybody in Louisiana who receives (or would like to receive) federal funding. It's as much a Democratic vision as Bush's plan is a Republican one—a No Service Provider Left Behind bill. There's $400 million for mental-health and substance-abuse services, $750 million for "incentive funds" for teachers, $600 million for early-childhood programs, $650 million for first responders, $600 million for Small Business Administration disaster loans, $500 million for farming infrastructure, and, to move beyond the small-ticket items, $50 billion for Community Development Block Grants, $40 billion for hurricane protection, and billions more for restitution payments.



Outside government, the debate has the same quality of reversion to form, as opposed to engagement with the problem. The Heritage Foundation has called upon the federal government to keep a distance, but insists that reconstruction can't work unless it involves school vouchers and capital-gains tax cuts. The American Enterprise Institute's online magazine has an article called "The Katrina Lesson," whose finding seems to be that moralizing public comments from entertainment-industry figures like Sean Penn and Celine Dion are annoying. MoveOn.org wants an independent investigating commission and restraints on budget cuts. A sense of political opportunity in Washington, rather than urgent need

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

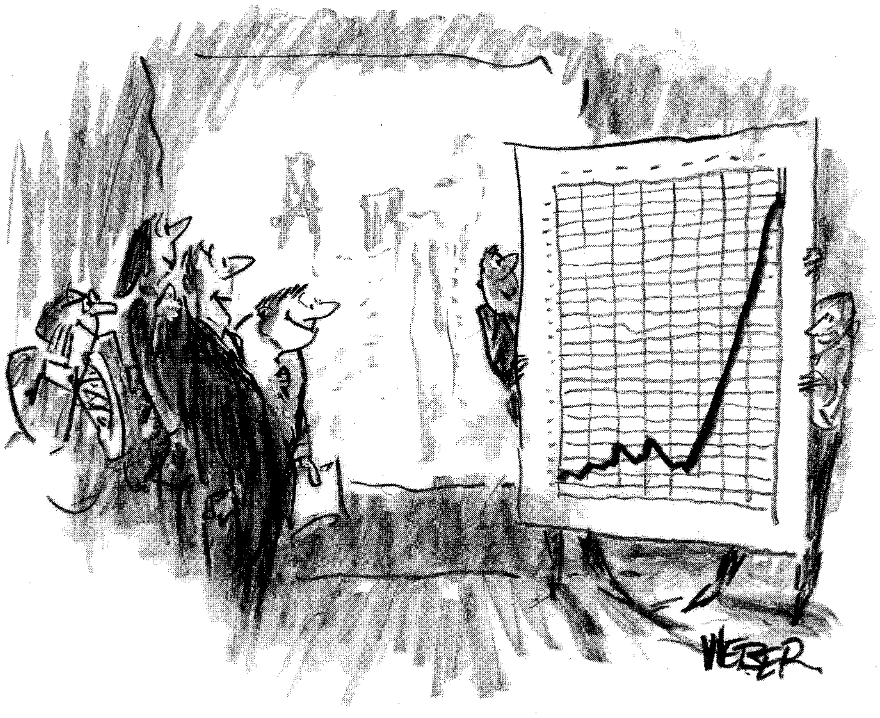
in Louisiana, pervades the discussion.

Reconstruction is a vast, daunting, and expensive project. The first set of problems, however, is much simpler and more urgent than all the pet theories would lead you to believe. The city is still not dry and neighborhoods are still without electricity. The water is probably not safe to drink. Sewers have not been repaired. Gas lines leak. Public transportation is not working. Schools are not open. The police force is leaderless. All these services have to be fixed before rebuilding can begin, and it is entirely possible that, in the rush, they will be fixed poorly, and will fail again if there is another emergency. The city needs a system of levees, canals, and pumps—and, eventually, wetlands—that can withstand a Category 5 hurricane. It needs an emergency-communication system. By the stupendous standard of spending that everybody is talking about, these things are not very expensive. Al Naomi, the Cassandra of the Army Corps of Engineers, who for years has been calling for what used to seem like prohibitively expensive levee enhancements for New Orleans, puts their cost at $3 billion.

The biggest and most immediate problem is that nobody seems to be running the reconstruction effort. Last week, Mayor Ray Nagin appointed a seventeen-member, carefully biracial, blue-chip commission, but it doesn't have any official power. Senator Landrieu proposed establishing a Protecting Essential Louisiana Infrastructure, Citizens, and Nature Commission (a clunky name chosen because its acronym evokes the state bird), most of whose members would be appointed by the President but would be from Louisiana, to oversee the flood-control work of the Corps of Engineers. Governor Kathleen Blanco has set up her own foundation. No one has over-all authority. A great national surge of money, good will, expertise, and willingness to work has no funnel to pour itself into.

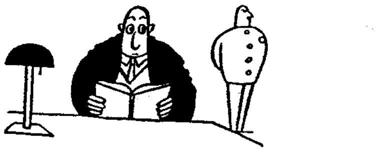
The Administration is obviously engaged in a deep internal dispute over this issue. *Time* recently reported that the idea of making one person responsible for handling the aftermath "appears to be dead," mainly because Vice-President Cheney opposes it. But, early last week, Bush hinted that he is still thinking about appointing such a person—who would, inevitably, be called the "hurricane czar." Then, at the end of the week, Governor Jeb Bush published an article in the Washington *Post* blandly asserting that, because local authorities can handle hurricanes in Florida, the federal government should stay away from Louisiana. It's easy to imagine the arguments in the White House: the first Iraq czar quickly got fired, and the second made the disastrous mistake of disbanding the Army; a hurricane czar would be a close-to-Bush target for criticism at a time when the Republican leadership is in trouble on every front; it would displease Republican conservatives; it might empower a showboat. But these arguments are not commensurate with the gravity of the situation. The Administration has made it clear that it was as unimpressed by the state and local officials' performance during the disaster as most of the rest of the country was with the Administration's. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, even under a new director, is still woefully behind on getting people out of shelters and into homes. For the White House to stand on Republican principle at this moment and leave the fate of a great city in a historic crisis in the hands of institutions that cannot manage it would be unpardonable: the President has to put someone in charge. An early selling point of the Bush Administration was that it was serious about big, bold ideas, but right now just doing what needs to be done seems like the only quality that really matters in a national government.

—*Nicholas Lemann*



"At times like this, I wish I were a poet."

FIELD STUDIES
DOCTOR DOORMAN



When Peter Bearman, a professor of sociology, moved from North Carolina to New York, seven years ago, to take a post at Columbia, he found his new colleagues unusually arrogant and difficult, even for the Ivy League. After considering other factors, he laid the blame on the doormen in their apartment buildings. He reasoned that the doormen had an interest in elevating the status of their tenants in order to enhance their own status, and so they treated the professors like big shots—for example, by addressing them as "professor"—until the professors came to believe that they really were big shots. Bearman felt that he had discovered a previously unob-

served variant of the Matthew effect, Robert K. Merton's theory concerning the compounding of iniquity among prominent and marginal individuals—the rich getting richer, and so forth.

Over time, Bearman rejected his initial hypothesis, as well as his first impressions of his colleagues, but his interest in doormen had taken hold. He noted that while sociologists had produced ethnographies of waiters, milkmen, bill collectors, and nail-salon cosmetologists, they'd left doormen alone, and so, a few years ago, he had his students interview doormen all over Manhattan, and then he wrote a book on the class's findings, which has just been published by the University of Chicago. It is called "Doormen," and it addresses such familiar phenomena as the Christmas bonus, the sports conversation, the shady visitor, the problem of boredom, and the elasticity of the rule that, as the sign in the lobby says, "All Visitors Must Be Announced." The book is an academic work, but to anyone who has ever wished that doormen would stop calling him "Sir," or worried that a babysitter might be mistaken for a mistress, or wondered whether he should refrain from looking at his nose hairs in the elevator mirror while the doorman presumably watches via security cam, it is a marvel. It provides the theoretical underpinnings for a lifetime of awkward awning encounters.

"Doormen and tenant interactions in the lobby, and the distinct ecology of the residential building, are shaped within the narrow shoals of too much closeness in a context of too much distance," Bearman writes. Closeness: doormen know an awful lot about their tenants. Distance: tenants know little about their doormen, and the socioeconomic gulf tends to be wide. To tenants doormen are "socially dead." Doormen are well paid, and they wear livery, but since, as Bearman writes, "occupational prestige is associated with ritual purity . . . doormen have lower prestige than others because their job is defined as one that absorbs impurities by mediating the relationship between the street and the tenant."

The other day, Bearman, a wry, boyish Virginian of forty-nine, set forth on a doorman tour of the Upper West Side. His pretext for entering buildings and inducing conversation was that he was looking at lobbies: "This is a spectacular mailroom!" "Here is a lobby designed not to spend time in." "Why is there a suit of armor here?" He tended to be greeted with genial suspicion: "And you are—?" "You guys are from—?" "Yes?" For an impurity he was pretty harmless. Each encounter illustrated something from the book; for example, ninety per cent of doormen say that their main job is security, though just about the same percentage say that they have never had any kind of security-threatening incident. At 103rd and Riverside, a sweaty, barrel-chested doorman gave a neighborhood threat assessment: "Sometimes maybe someone is trying to break a window or steal something." Bearman asked him whether anything like this had ever happened to him. "No."

"But it could?"

"Yes."

Bearman said, "Doormen produce the imaginary disorder that they then claim to stop."

For a capper, Bearman wanted to visit the Montana, a giant postwar luxury building with Dakota pretensions, where, among other things, he hoped to see evidence for his dubious assertion that half the trees in New York City are to be found indoors, but a moment of disorientation led him instead to the Bromley, a giant postwar luxury building with Montana pretensions. According to the doorman on duty, "Strictly Business" had been filmed there. "Was that the one with the monkeys?" Bearman asked.

"No. It didn't have monkeys."

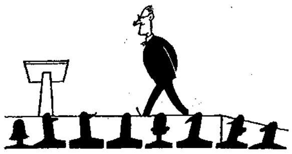
"Oh, that's 'Monkey Business.' "

The doorman said, "When you have a Class A condominium, you see all kinds of stuff." He told an elaborate story involving a couple having sex on the scaffolding outside. After he got them to stop, and climb down, they walked into the lobby, declared that they were staying with a tenant, boarded an elevator, and resumed their exertions, in full view of the security cameras, and therefore of both the doorman and a handyman, who had been buffing the floors. What did this illustrate? That there are many doormen in New York with stories like this.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

AROUND CITY HALL

STILL RUNNING



A quick recap of the mayoral campaign thus far: Gifford Miller, the City Council speaker and the Democrats' top fund-raiser, received fewer Bronx votes in last month's primary than did a man (Christopher Brodeur) who spent less than two hundred dollars and never once visited the borough. The former Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, meanwhile, secured the least enthusiastic *Times* endorsement in memory ("Inanimate objects have been as dynamic as Mr. Ferrer") and won the nomination. Mayor Bloomberg managed to fend off a primary challenge on the Republican side, by contesting the petition signatures of his lone rival, Thomas Ognibene, and has since begun tacking left, even issuing an unsolicited position paper on John Roberts's nomination to the Supreme Court, which he opposed. Still, Bloomberg continues to be dogged on the campaign trail by an unknown antagonist wearing a George Bush mask—a pesky reminder of his role in helping to reëlect the President.

Tom Ognibene, for one, does not find the Bush stunt to be particularly apt, given that Bloomberg has always been, in his belief, "a left-wing, liberal-Democrat ideologue." Last week, Ognibene, a former councilman from Middle Village, Queens, dropped by City Hall to make the case that conservatives who are angry with the Mayor should protest not by supporting Ferrer but by supporting him. Ognibene, who is sixty-one, is now running on the Conservative Party line, in an attempt to rescue old-fashioned Republican ideals—low taxes, the sanctity of marriage, an end to abortion—from what he considers a dying local G.O.P. establishment. He's playing Pat Buchanan to Bloomberg's George W. Bush.

"See, what we did in the nineties with Rudy was substantive, and what Bloomberg's doing now is more smoke and mirrors," Ognibene said, standing at the back of the rotunda, where politicians and their operatives routinely go to conduct private conversations in public view. "The city's filthier, there's more graffiti, there really is more crime, notwithstanding the Mayor's manipulation of the numbers." He went on, "I think that ultimately he'll abandon the Republican Party. Certainly all of his aides in City Hall are retread Democrats."

Ognibene, a former tight end and Army lieutenant, has a pink complexion and a white goatee. He seems like a guy who would make a good Department of Homeland Security official, and it's not hard to get the wrong idea, at least momentarily, when he says that he "could have dealt Bloomberg a deathblow" had he qualified for the primary.

For the next month and a half, Ognibene said, he plans to be "as active as I can be." He was slightly put out that so many reporters had covered the efforts of his daughter Eve, a veterinarian, to rescue animals in the Gulf after Hurricane Katrina: "She got more press in New York than I did."

In November, he is hoping for four per cent of the vote, which he said would amount to a moral victory. Whether that will be enough to tip the balance in Ferrer's favor is of little consequence to Ognibene, since he regards the two candidates as more or less the same.

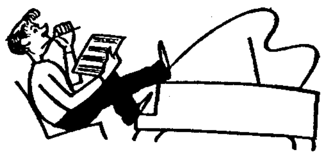
At the moment, Ognibene was in an unfortunate state of limbo: his new handouts and posters, identifying his Conservative Party affiliation and, more important, his backing from a bar-and-restaurant lobby (he opposes the smoking ban), would not be ready until the weekend. He didn't feel up to meeting and greeting empty-handed.

"I like to have those 'leave-behinds,'" he said. "It's a shame to meet somebody and not leave him with anything to remember me by."

—Ben McGrath

ON THE AIR

PIGSKIN POET



This season, ABC will air its final broadcast of "Monday Night Football," the thirty-six-year-old marquee franchise. It's been an entertaining run. From the rantings of Howard Cosell (he eventually left the show, after referring to a black player as a "little monkey"), to Hank Williams, Jr.,'s berserk intros, and, last year, Nicollette Sheridan's nude locker-room embrace, the show's popularity has always derived as much from spectacle as from sport. This year, as a swan song (sixteen swan songs, actually), the network has hired Tim McGraw, the country singer, to perform a customized halftime ditty, which will be rewritten each week to reflect the highlights of the previous day's games.

The song is always sung to the tune of McGraw's 1995 hit "I Like It, I Love It." In the original, McGraw tells of forsaking his manly pastimes in the name of love. He stops watching sports and helps with the housekeeping. For the "M.N.F." version, the producers have replaced the object of McGraw's affection ("that little gal's lovin'") with more rough-and-tumble pursuits ("pushin' and a-shovin'"). Each Sunday night, a writer named Greg Jennings makes up new lyrics—six rhyming couplets. That gives him only a line or two (and a matter of hours) in which to gloss each game. The result sometimes suggests a work by Gertrude Stein, had Gertrude Stein been a cheerleader: "Always had the horses, now the Colts have a big-time 'D' / Dallas takes a third straight game right up to the fat lady." Or, referring to the Steelers' quarterback: "A little cheese on that Roethlisberger—gonna have to get me some."

One recent Sunday evening, at home in Los Angeles, Jennings was having trouble finding a rhyme for a line he liked: "A rookie Cadillac breaks a fifty-year-old N.F.L. mark." ("Dark"? "Park"? "Lark"?) "To get something really good," he said, "I occasionally have to write myself into a corner."

At seven-thirty, Jennings took part in a conference call with Valerie Fischler and Fred Gaudelli, two "M.N.F." producers, to discuss the next day's song. In the background, a murmur of the game between the Giants and the Chargers could be heard. Jennings had e-mailed his lyrics earlier, and Gaudelli read them aloud on the phone.

"You think this line's going to be able to sing O.K.?" Gaudelli asked. "'Vikes finally wake up. Ol' Daunte's still got game. / Three kickers win it, even one that was lame.'"

He paused. "'Came up lame?'" he proposed. "That's the only way you get it. Otherwise you're saying this guy is a lame kicker."

They discussed different ways to say "win it." Jennings quietly sang new possibilities.

"What about 'ice it'?" Fischler said.

Gaudelli thought the line needed some last-minute drama. "'Kickers win it at—' 'Kickers win it at—'" he said.

"'Win it at the wire'?" Fischler said.

"Well, we already have the fat lady," Jennings reminded them.

Jennings kept trying out new variations: "'Three kickers take it' . . . 'Clinch it' . . . 'Feel it.'"

Gaudelli jumped in. "'Nail it'? 'Seal it'?" He paused. "You know, 'Three kickers win it' says it all, man."

The Giants game went on in the background. "Touchdown San Diego!" someone shouted. "But there's a flag." A long silence fell over the phone line.

When they returned to the lyrics, Fischler wondered whether the word "dominant," which Jennings had used to describe the Colts' defense, might be too hard to sing. "How about 'big-time'?"

"I like 'big-time' better anyway," Gaudelli said. "I'm not sure I'm ready to call these guys 'dominant.'"

McGraw recorded the new song the next morning in a Nashville studio, so that, later in the day, Fischler could splice together a reel of highlights to accompany the lyrics. Despite the late-night fine-tuning, McGraw had difficulty with some of the language.

"Sometimes what they write and how you sing don't quite match up," he said, "and you have to cut out words or change something." "Three kickers win it" rolled right off his twangy tongue.

—Austin Kelley

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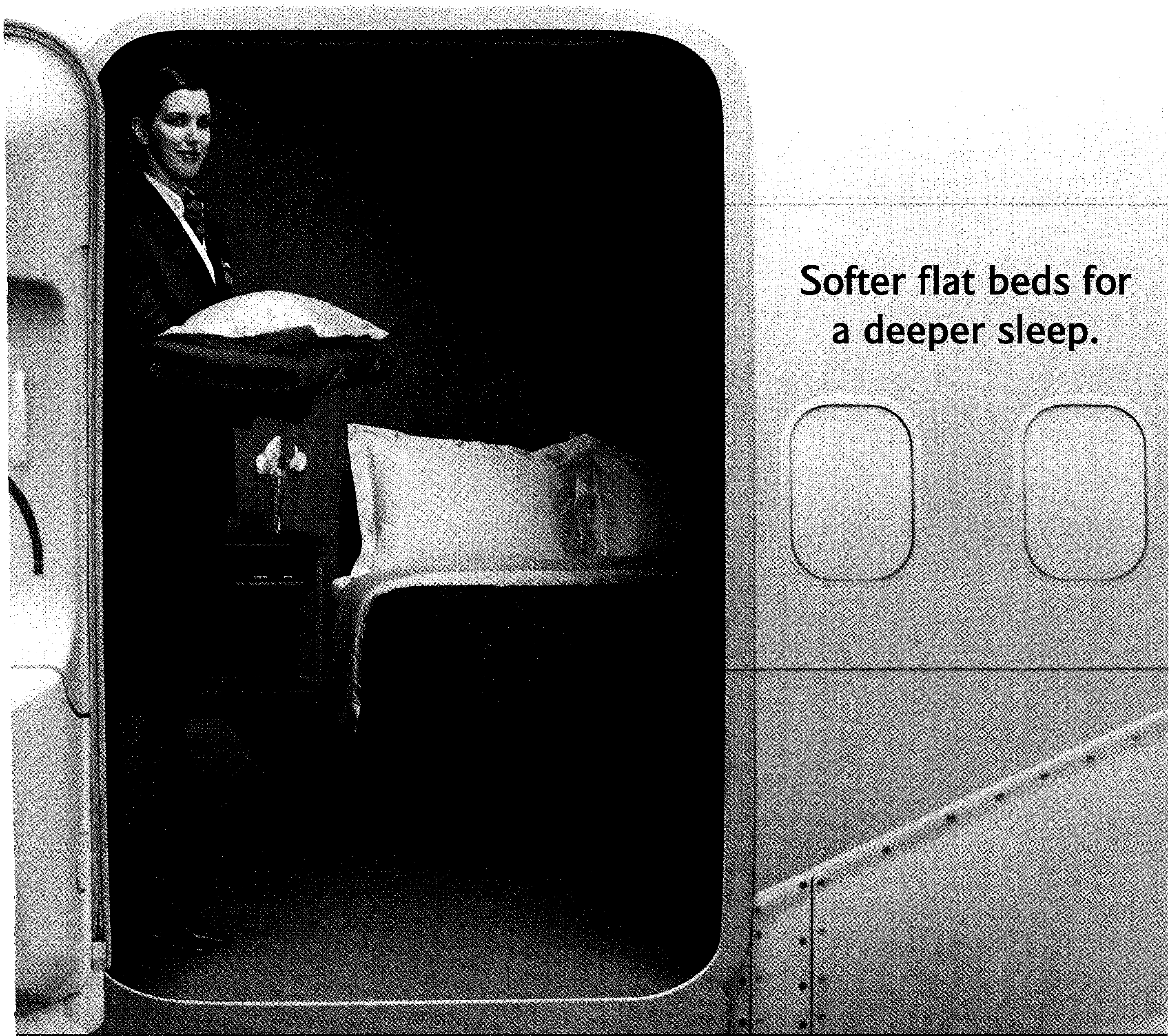

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MEDICAL DISPATCHES

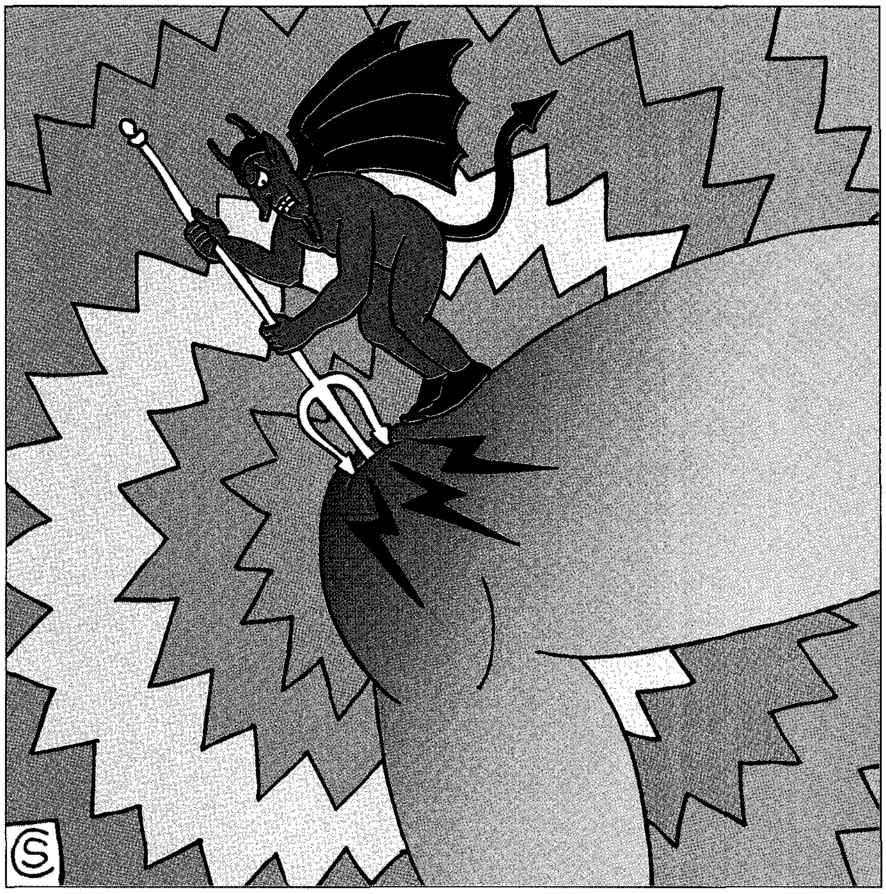
WHEN PAIN REMAINS

What should patients do when doctors can't figure out how to treat their suffering?

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

Nearly everyone has stubbed a toe or skinned a knee. The pain may be severe, but most of the time it is fleeting. In some people, however, the pain persists for months, even years, and becomes debilitating. On a balmy evening about a year ago, a woman I will call Barbara was strolling in Manhattan when her foot caught the curb as she crossed a street, and she fell face down on the pavement. A jogger helped her up, and she hobbled the few blocks to her apartment. Her left knee was bright red and extremely sore. Over the next few days, it turned black-and-blue, and the pain did not subside. Instead of the dull discomfort typical of a bruise, Barbara felt as though she had a "violent toothache" in her knee. She cut holes in her sheets to prevent them from touching the skin around the injury. Even the breeze over her knee from the air-conditioner was excruciating.

Barbara is in her early sixties, a trim, poised woman, who grew up in California riding horses and swimming in the ocean. In New York, she played tennis and worked out at the gym. But two weeks after her accident she still could not bend or straighten her left leg without intolerable pain. Unable to sleep, she spent hours each night leaning over a counter in the kitchen, shifting her weight from one foot to the other, or slumped on a sofa in the living room, gingerly holding her injured knee in front of her chest. She saw an orthopedic surgeon, who ordered an X-ray of her leg, which showed that she did not have a fracture. He told her to be patient and the wound would soon heal. A month later, she consulted a second orthopedic surgeon, an expert in sports injuries. He performed an MRI scan of the knee, which revealed no abnormalities. Nevertheless, he speculated that cartilage fragments might have broken off the kneecap and lodged in the joint. He recommended an arthroscopic lavage—a procedure in which doctors use a fibre-optic instrument to peer inside the knee and flush out debris. Barbara decided to seek another opinion. A third orthopedist told her that he could not explain her symptoms, and prescribed a potent narcotic. By this time, she had stopped going to movies and restaurants. She had a subscription to the Metropolitan Opera, but that fall she did not attend a single performance. "I couldn't risk even letting my knee touch the seat in front of me, or having someone brush my leg while coming down the aisle," she said. Finally, she consulted a neurologist. He gave her a different painkiller.


R.S.D. patients are often dismissed as "neurotic," a doctor said, until you meet them.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

When I met Barbara, in January, she reached into her purse and pulled out a plastic bag full of medications: Vicodin, Darvocet, Ultracet, doxepin, naproxen, and Mobic. She said that the drugs made her feel "dopey" and "weird," and provided only brief pain relief. But at least now Barbara had a diagnosis. Shortly before Thanksgiving, she had consulted a physical therapist she had once seen for a torn hamstring. The woman examined her knee and told her that she probably had reflex sympathetic dystrophy, or R.S.D. "I had no idea what she was talking about," Barbara said. "I went to the Internet to see what the devil this was."

R.S.D. was first described in detail in "Injuries of Nerves and Their Consequences," a monograph published in 1872 by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, an innovative Philadelphia physician who was also a popular poet and novelist. (His best-known novel was "Hugh

Wynne," about the experiences of a Philadelphia Quaker during the American Revolution, published in the late eighteen-nineties.) Mitchell was renowned for his studies of the human nervous system and for his "rest cure," a regimen involving bed rest, massage, and a high-calorie diet, which he prescribed for women suffering from nervous disorders. (His patients included Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," about a woman's gradual descent into madness under the oppressive ministrations of her physician husband, was inspired by his treatment.) During the Civil War, he had served as a surgeon for the Union Army and had treated soldiers wounded by bayonets, sabres, and bullets. Some continued to complain of severe pain long after their injuries—typically in an arm or a leg—had healed, and Mitchell noticed that these men had other symptoms in common: burning pain, accompanied by swelling, redness, and temperature fluctuations in the injured limb. One of his patients was a seventeen-year-old soldier named David Schiveley, who had been shot in the right shoulder at the Battle of Gettysburg and later developed pain and redness in his left hand as well. "The left hand . . . is painful on pressure or touch, especially in the palm," Mitchell wrote. "It is difficult even to examine him properly on account of his timidity, and his whole appearance exhibits the effects of pain . . . and want of rest."

Mitchell called the cluster of symptoms that he observed "causalgia," and he was evidently affected by his patients' suffering. "Perhaps few persons who are not physicians can realize the influence which long-continued and unendurable pain may have on both body and mind," he wrote. "Under such torments the temper changes, the most amiable grow irritable, the bravest soldier becomes a coward, and the strongest man is scarcely less nervous than the most hysterical girl." Other physicians adopted the term causalgia to refer to a pain syndrome that occasionally developed in a limb after an injury or a medical procedure. In 1946, James Evans, a Boston physician, introduced the phrase "reflex sympathetic dystrophy" to describe a similar disorder in patients who had no discernible nerve damage, and in 1994 the International Association for the Study of Pain reclassified the disease as "complex regional pain syndrome," or C.R.P.S., and distinguished between two types: C.R.P.S. Type 1, which occurs in the absence of a known nerve injury (what Evans called R.S.D.), and C.R.P.S. Type 2, which involves an injury to a major nerve. A 2002 World Institute of Pain report on C.R.P.S. noted that "excruciating pain is the hallmark of the disease."

Some researchers estimate that R.S.D. occurs once for every two thousand physical traumas—the vast majority involving arms, hands, legs, or feet—and that each year as many as fifteen thousand Americans develop it. (According to the World Institute of Pain report, most R.S.D. patients—between sixty and eighty per cent—are women.) However, many doctors are unaware of the disorder, and some insist that it is primarily a psychiatric condition. Anne Louise Oaklander, an assistant professor of anesthesiology and neurology at Harvard Medical School, who studies patients with the syndrome, told me that she never learned about R.S.D. in medical school. "Patients with this were often dismissed as being 'neurotic,' 'self-serving,' or 'somatizing,' " she said. "Then you meet them. You realize that they are reasonable people, and you see them in clinic periodically and it becomes clear that this is not a psychiatric disorder." Oaklander believes that many cases of R.S.D. are "iatrogenic"—inadvertently caused by doctors—and arise after minor operations, such as arthroscopies of the knee, even when the procedure is performed correctly. "This is the disease that can happen to anyone," she said. "It's not like heart disease, where you stay slim, and you don't smoke, and you exercise, and you can reduce the risks. There is no mammography that you can perform preventively. And sometimes it happens after the most seemingly innocent event, like slipping on the street. Virtue does not protect you."

In order for us to feel pain, highly specialized nerves must be stimulated, and under normal conditions these are difficult to arouse. When we are exposed to intense heat, cold, irri-

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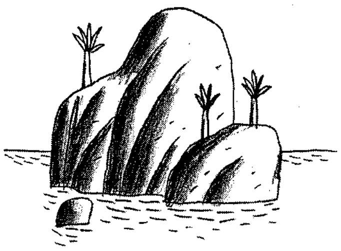
tants, or pressure, nerve fibres called neurons respond by sending electrical impulses to the dorsal horn, a part of the spinal cord that acts as a relay station, transmitting the impulses to other neurons. Some neurons in the dorsal horn cause the impulses to become more powerful, or make more of them. Other neurons weaken the impulses, or reduce their number. Typically, only a small fraction of the impulses that enter the spinal cord make their way to the brain, where we experience them as pain.

Until the nineteen-eighties, scientists believed that pain impulses, whether they were triggered by a bacterial infection or a blow to the ribs, travelled along the same neural pathways to the brain. Over the past two decades, however, experiments first in rodents and then in human beings have revealed that the nervous system is much more malleable—or "plastic"—than it was previously thought to be. Clifford Woolf, a professor of anesthesia research at Harvard Medical School, who directs the Neural Plasticity Research Group at Massachusetts General Hospital, compares the nervous system to a computer. Normally, each neuron forms connections, called synapses, with thousands of other neurons, creating multiple pathways between the spinal cord and the brain. The path an impulse follows determines how we experience it—as throbbing pain or dull ache. The process, Woolf says, is like running "different software programs." When a nerve is injured, however, changes can occur in surrounding cells and synapses—in what Woolf calls the nervous system's "hardware." "The hardware change is a disease state," he says. "Pain is the disease."

Injured fibres may release small proteins that cause swelling, redness, and temperature fluctuations in surrounding tissue—symptoms that make R.S.D. easy to confuse with Lyme disease or lupus, an autoimmune disorder. In some patients, altered neurons in the spinal cord interact with nearby motor nerves, provoking muscle spasms, tremors, and dystonia, a condition characterized by involuntary muscle contractions. In the early nineteen-eighties, Woolf discovered that neurons in rats that had been repeatedly exposed to painful stimuli (such as intense heat) often began to react to innocuous stimuli (such as a light touch) as well, a phenomenon that he called "central sensitization" and which may explain the hypersensitivity to touch that frequently afflicts R.S.D. patients.

There is no consensus on how to treat R.S.D. Doctors currently choose from among more than twenty drugs and procedures, none of which have been approved for use with the disorder by the F.D.A. After Barbara's physical therapist told her about R.S.D., she met with Dr. Jeffrey Ngeow, an anesthesiologist and pain specialist at the Hospital for Special Surgery, in New York, who confirmed the diagnosis and proposed injecting anesthetic into the cluster of sympathetic nerves next to her spine. Such injections, commonly referred to as nerve blocks, have been administered to R.S.D. patients for decades, as a means of calming their nervous system—if only temporarily. Over the course of two weeks, Barbara received two nerve blocks in her lower back, and for a few days she felt better. Gradually, however, the anesthetic wore off and the pain returned. Discouraged, Barbara consulted an orthopedic surgeon at Ngeow's hospital, who said, "You don't have R.S.D. No more nerve blocks." He told her that she had a neuroma—a benign tumor made of nerve tissue—and persuaded Ngeow to inject anesthetic directly into her knee. The knee was numb for several hours, but soon the pain was worse than before; for several days, Barbara was unable to put any weight on her left leg. At a friend's insistence, she saw a neurologist at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, who performed a full-body CT scan and repeated the MRI scan of her knee. "He thought I had bone cancer," Barbara said. But the test showed no evidence of disease, and the neurologist told her that she probably had Lyme disease. Barbara had been vaccinated against the disease, and told the doctor that the antibodies in her blood reflected this fact. She decided to return to Ngeow for more nerve blocks.



I met Barbara on the day that she was to receive her sixth injection. She was wearing a Lidoderm patch, which numbed the skin over her knee, and silk long johns to prevent her slacks from brushing against her leg. Over lunch, Barbara told me about a friend who she thought had probably had R.S.D. The woman had undergone numerous tests, all inconclusive, had been in constant pain, and had eventually committed suicide. Barbara began to cry. "When the pain rises up, I think it is not really worth living," she said.

Ngeow says that many of his patients who have received multiple injections are no longer in pain, but the treatment is controversial. "Nerve blocks can produce wonderful temporary relief," Oaklander told me. "And the physician has the satisfaction of knowing, as the patient walks out of the office, that he has relieved pain. But he has done no more to address the cause of the problem than if a dentist addressed an abscessed tooth only by putting in Novocain." For her R.S.D. patients, Oaklander frequently prescribes nortriptyline, an antidepressant that blocks nerve impulses. (There have been few significant clinical trials involving R.S.D. therapies, but in studies of other types of pain disorders, including shingles, nortriptyline has been shown to decrease discomfort significantly.)

Robert J. Schwartzman, a neurologist at Drexel University College of Medicine, in Philadelphia, who has treated more than five thousand people with R.S.D., is experimenting with a more radical approach to the disease. In 2001, he began collaborating with a team of anesthesiologists in Germany, whose patients included amputees suffering from phantom pain—sensations in the absent limb. The German doctors had discovered that they could reduce phantom pain by injecting the patients with ketamine, an anesthetic, and they had found that the drug was also effective for treating R.S.D. Over the past four years, Schwartzman has

"Do you have any that thrive on cigarette smoke and near-total darkness?"

sent twenty-five of his most debilitated patients—"They've tried narcotics, morphine pumps, every single pain thing we can think of," he says—to Germany, where they were injected with ketamine in doses large enough to sustain a coma for five days. The doctors hoped that the prolonged exposure to ketamine would block the receptors on neurons that transmit pain signals. "It's like rebooting the computer," Schwartzman says. "You turn off the receptors, and the system goes back to normal."

The therapy is risky. To minimize side effects, which include hallucinations, flashbacks, and memory loss, the doctors administer two other medications, clonidine and midazolam. ("Boosters" of the drugs—enough to cause sedation for several hours—are given in an outpatient setting at two weeks, one month, and three months after the initial treatment.) Of greater concern is the coma itself, which increases susceptibility to pneumonia, blood clots, and stroke; for this reason, patients are kept in an intensive-care unit throughout the procedure. According to Schwartzman, none of his patients who have received the treatment to date have suffered serious complications, and thirteen have undergone detailed cognitive assessments, which revealed no loss of brain function. Still, the therapy does not necessarily amount to a cure. "All come out of the coma with no pain," Schwartzman says. "But in fifty per cent of cases the pain comes back"—typically because the patient reinjures the limb.

Since 2002, Schwartzman has been treating patients at his clinic at Drexel with five- and ten-day courses of ketamine injections, in doses much smaller than those given in Germany. (So far, the medical-ethics committee at Drexel has not granted Schwartzman permission to treat patients to the point of coma.) In February, Barbara met Schwartzman at his office for a consultation and saw R.S.D. patients sedated in lounge chairs. Her internist had told her that if she took ketamine her brain might "never be the same," and she decided not to try a course of injections. Schwartzman has treated a hundred and thirty patients this way, and has twelve hundred more on a waiting list; it will take him four years to treat them all. Most patients report a dramatic reduction in pain for between three and eight months, he says, and for many that represents a significant respite.

One morning in March, at the Nerve Injury Unit that Oaklander runs at Massachusetts General Hospital, I met an R.S.D. patient I will call Elena. She had entered the police academy in her home town, in western Massachusetts, at the age of forty-four, after bringing up several children, and she had been an officer on active duty for five years. During her spare time, she worked out, running and attending kickboxing classes for several hours a day, six times a week. One night in November, 2001, Elena had been patrolling bars in her town with seven other officers when a man with a history of assault-and-battery convictions punched one of her colleagues. Elena tackled the man. Then the other policemen piled on top of her, pinning her right forearm under the weight of their struggling bodies. Eventually, the suspect was subdued and handcuffed. Afterward, Elena recalled, "My arm felt heavy, as though I'd been working out at the gym with weights for hours." For several months, the discomfort persisted, and she sometimes felt a tingling sensation. In late March, 2002, she awoke from a deep sleep convinced that her house was on fire: her arm was burning. Her hand was hot, puffy, and purplish-red, and the veins had swollen so much that they looked like fingers. "I thought they were going to explode," Elena said. "I was so scared. It was as if I had the same pain as the night of the injury, and it had come back, only a hundred times worse." After a few hours, the swelling decreased and the pain began to subside. Her doctor sent her to a hand surgeon, and when she arrived for the appointment her hand was freezing. She told the surgeon that when the hand was hot and swollen the skin was too sensitive to touch. "He just said, 'R.S.D.,' " Elena said.

Oaklander gave Elena oxcarbazepine, an anti-seizure medication that decreases electrical activity in the nervous system, and calcitonin, a hormone that has been shown in clinical trials to reduce pain. But Elena experienced side effects from both drugs: the oxcarbazepine made her tired and agitated, and the calcitonin gave her nosebleeds. She then took nortriptyline for several months and is now undergoing physical therapy. She has not worked in a year and a half.

Oaklander believes that R.S.D. is caused by nerve injuries that are often too small to detect in standard exams, which enable doctors to measure the flow of electrical impulses along specific nerve pathways. "The conventional tests of nerve injury are usually useless," she said. However, R.S.D. can leave dramatic evidence in human tissue. In 1998, researchers in the Netherlands examined amputated legs from eight patients who suffered from severe R.S.D. The scientists found that the legs contained fewer than normal numbers of pain fibres—the neurons that fire to transmit pain signals. (The fibres degenerate when trauma damages the nerves.) Over the past several years, Oaklander has performed skin biopsies on eighteen patients with R.S.D. In all but one, she found that there were fewer pain fibres in the skin in the affected area than in skin elsewhere on the body. The difference was subtle—R.S.D. patients had an average of twenty-five per cent fewer pain fibres in the affected skin—but similar decreases in pain fibres have been observed in other diseases associated with chronic pain, including diabetes and shingles.

The experiment helped convince Oaklander that the distinction between the two types of C.R.P.S. is artificial. She believes that both represent a single neurological disease, in which nerve injuries may be tiny and hard to detect or large and easy to identify. When one of her R.S.D. patients fails to improve with medication, Oaklander considers two surgical options. The first, which is rarely used, involves cutting open the affected limb in order to examine the nerves and insure that no scar tissue impinges on them. The second entails implanting an electrical stimulator in the limb or near the spinal cord to send benign impulses at regular intervals along the injured nerve. Once the stimulator is implanted, the patient can turn it on or off by holding a special magnet over the skin, and some eventually find that they no longer need to turn it on. (Doctors don't know why electrical stimulation is beneficial; the regular impulses may mimic the normal activity of the nerve, helping the brain and spinal cord to function normally.) Thousands of people have received stimulators, though complications, such as infection and electrode malfunction, are common.

Tim Connick, a fifty-year-old warehouse worker who lives in Lynn, Massachusetts, received a stimulator four years ago. In 1996, he fell from a loading dock and broke his heel. The bone split down the middle and shattered into thirteen pieces. He had surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital and started physical therapy. But he spent most of the day with his leg suspended in a sling, immobilized by pain. "I felt like someone had taken an open pair of scissors, jabbed it into my foot, and left it there," he said. Six months after his operation, he was getting two hours of sleep a night. He returned to work, where he was reassigned to a desk job, but his constant moaning disturbed his co-workers. While driving, he wrapped strands of hair around his index finger and pulled on the hair, which helped distract him from the pain in his foot and enabled him to focus on the road.

"Larry couldn't be here today, but representing him is the scene from 'The Shawshank Redemption' that he quotes from every time."

Eventually, Connick's surgeon referred him to the pain clinic at Massachusetts General, where nortriptyline was prescribed, and he was given a series of nerve blocks. Neither treatment helped for long. Connick next tried gabapentin, which blocks the release of pain neurotransmitters in the brain, but after several months it became clear that the medication had not reduced his pain and was making him aggressive toward his wife and children. Connick also tried phenytoin, an anti-seizure drug. His pain abated slightly, but the medicine caused ringing in his ears and double vision. Four years after his accident, Connick returned to the pain clinic and asked his doctors to cut off his foot. They suggested another course of nortriptyline. "I said, 'Stop!' " Connick recalled. " 'You're going in circles.' " He was eventually referred to Oaklander, who told him about the surgical options, emphasizing that neither was guaranteed to permanently eliminate the pain. Connick chose to have a stimulator implanted. The operation lasted less than an hour: an electrode was placed near the nerve that runs to the heel, and attached by a wire to a generator the size of a beeper, which was implanted under the skin at the abdomen. The next day, Connick took a walk on the hospital grounds, and, for the first time in five years, felt no pain. Two years ago, he returned to his job in the warehouse, where, he says, he is "making eighteen- and twenty-year-olds look like lazy bums."

Oaklander believes that one of the reasons doctors disagree about how to treat R.S.D. may be that they are seeing patients at different stages of the disease. She says that some may have "acute" R.S.D., which spontaneously resolves after several weeks; in such cases, reports that nerve blocks and other drugs are beneficial may be misleading. "Early on, you can tell someone that he or she is probably going to do well," she says. "But after a year the prognosis drops off."

The extent to which the nervous system can repair itself—how plastic its hardware is—remains a mystery, but encouraging evidence continues to accumulate. Increasing numbers of stroke patients, especially younger ones, fully recover with the help of drugs and physical therapy, and in healthy people the acquisition of new skills has been shown to alter brain circuitry. Recent studies using sophisticated imaging techniques reveal changes in the cerebral cortex of people learning specific tactile tasks, such as how to read Braille or play the violin. One of the patients in Oaklander's skin-biopsy study had only three per cent of the normal total of small pain fibres in the skin of her injured leg. When Oaklander repeated the biopsy almost a year later, the number of fibres in the woman's skin had increased to near normal levels. In separate studies published in 2002 and 2003, researchers in Finland and Germany conducted brain scans of eighteen R.S.D. patients who suffered from pain symptoms in one hand. Both groups found that the region of the cortex responsible for processing sensory data from the affected hand was markedly smaller than normal. The German team noted that in some cases data from the hand were being processed by the part of the cortex normally devoted to the lips. In a follow-up study, completed last year, the brains of ten of the German R.S.D. patients were scanned again and found to be virtually normal. "Beneficial remodelling can be encouraged through deliberate practice and use," Oaklander says. "The goal with R.S.D. is to figure out ways to remodel their spinal cord and brain back to more normal pathways of sensation."

In March, Barbara decided to end her course of nerve blocks and stop taking medication. She forced herself to walk half an hour each day and continued to see her physical therapist. Gradually, the pain in her knee subsided. In June, however, she put on a cotton skirt, and when the material brushed her knee the pain was intolerable. That day, she wore a Lidoderm patch.

"I've been thrown from horses, and once fell down a set of marble stairs on my backside, and had no persistent pain," Barbara said, still perplexed that her fall had been the source of so much agony. She confessed that over the winter, as she pondered her friend's decision to commit suicide, she had imagined making the same choice. "I'm trying to rewire my nerves," she said. "But sometimes the pain creeps back." ♦

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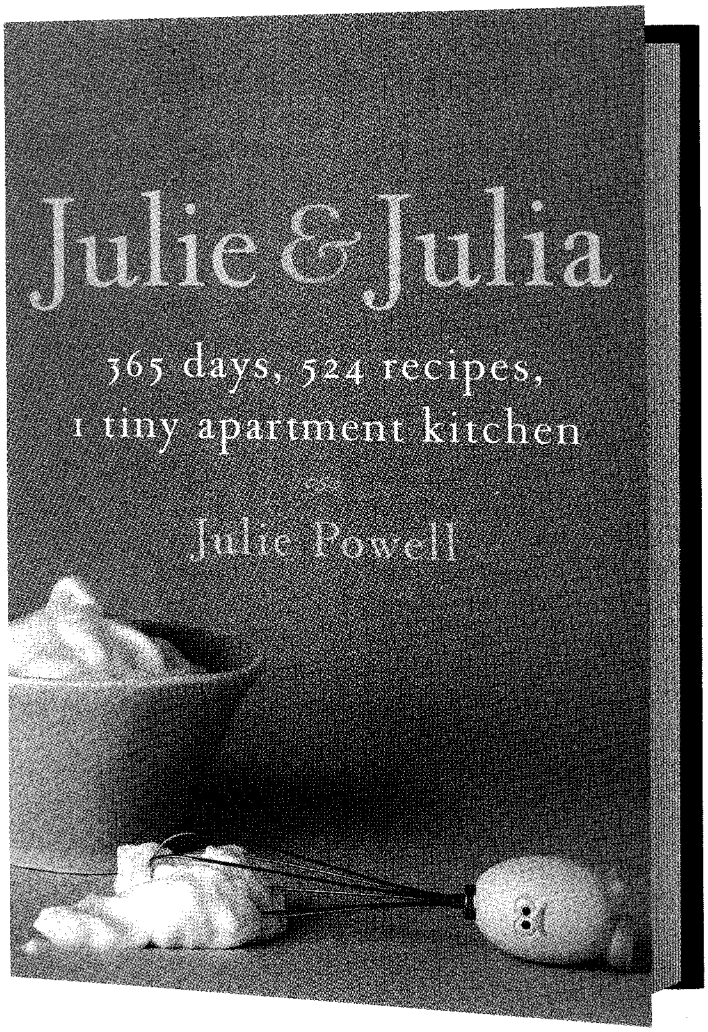

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

GOOD EVENING AND GOOD LUCK

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

> An Internet video newscast called the Voice of the Caliphate was broadcast for the first time on Monday, purporting to be a production of al Qaeda and featuring an anchorman who wore a black ski mask and an ammunition belt. . . . A copy of the Koran, the Muslim holy book, was placed by his right hand and a rifle affixed to a tripod was pointed at the camera.
>
> —*The Washington Post.*

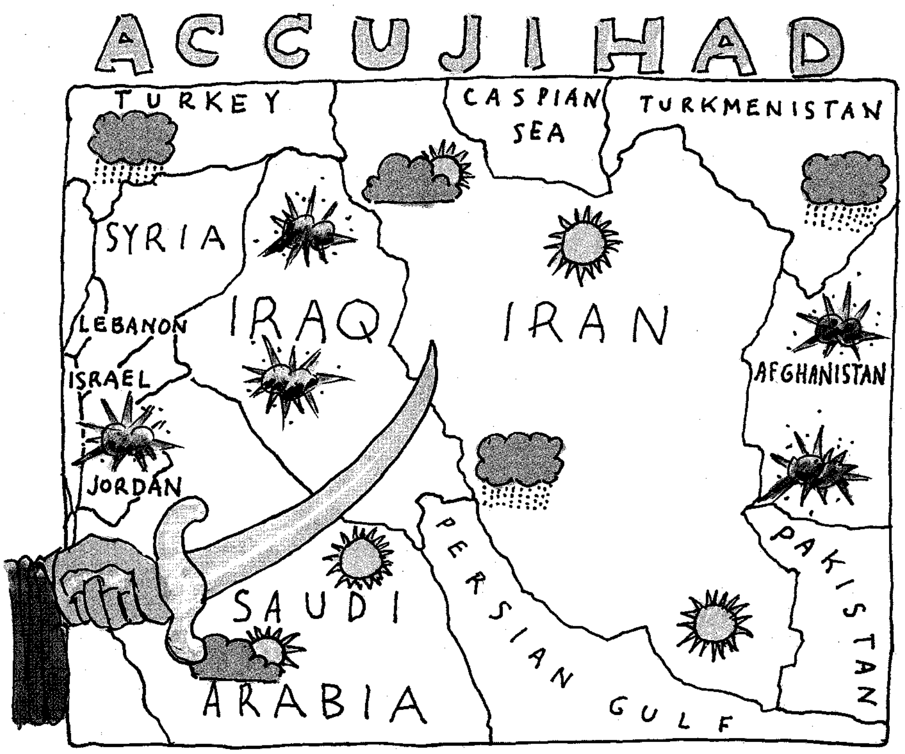
"In Gaza, Jews on the run—see how they squeal. Along the Gulf Coast of the Great Satan, a spectacular storm destroys the City of Homosexuals, New Orleans, and, in infidel-occupied Iraq, a car bomber drives into a supermarket, creating a fireball in the meat section, destroying the entire inventory of pork products. But there was also bad news today: A startling report on new infrared U.S. helicopter capabilities that may affect the way you commute. The Dow dips below nine thousand as traders take short-term profits. And, finally tonight, our Martyr of the Week, someone for whom the phrase 'pluck out the eyes of the crusader' is more than just a slogan. In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate, good evening. I'm Zalwar al-Qamush.

"First, a look at the local situation. In Afghanistan, another tremendous victory. We have this live report from our correspondent Anwar bin Haz, in Kandahar. Anwar, salaam."

"*Zalwar, those are poppies behind me, as far as the eye can see. Local officials—that is, the ones we have not yet thrown down wells for collaborating with the American wolves—say this year's crop will be a record, producing literally tons of base material for high-grade heroin.*"

"Thank you, Anwar bin Haz. In Italy tonight, an exciting plan to blow up the Vatican during Christmas Eve services—after we return."

Ali Dada. Spent his whole life struggling against Zionism and imperialism. Scrimped and saved to send all of us to madrasah and terrorist training camps. Now he's in his sixties. His arthritis doesn't allow him to sneak over the border the way he used to, to kidnap American contractors from Halliburton and Kellogg Brown & Root, though he still insists on making the improvised explosive devices himself. That's why I give him Al Advil, the non-Jewish anti-inflammatory medicine.



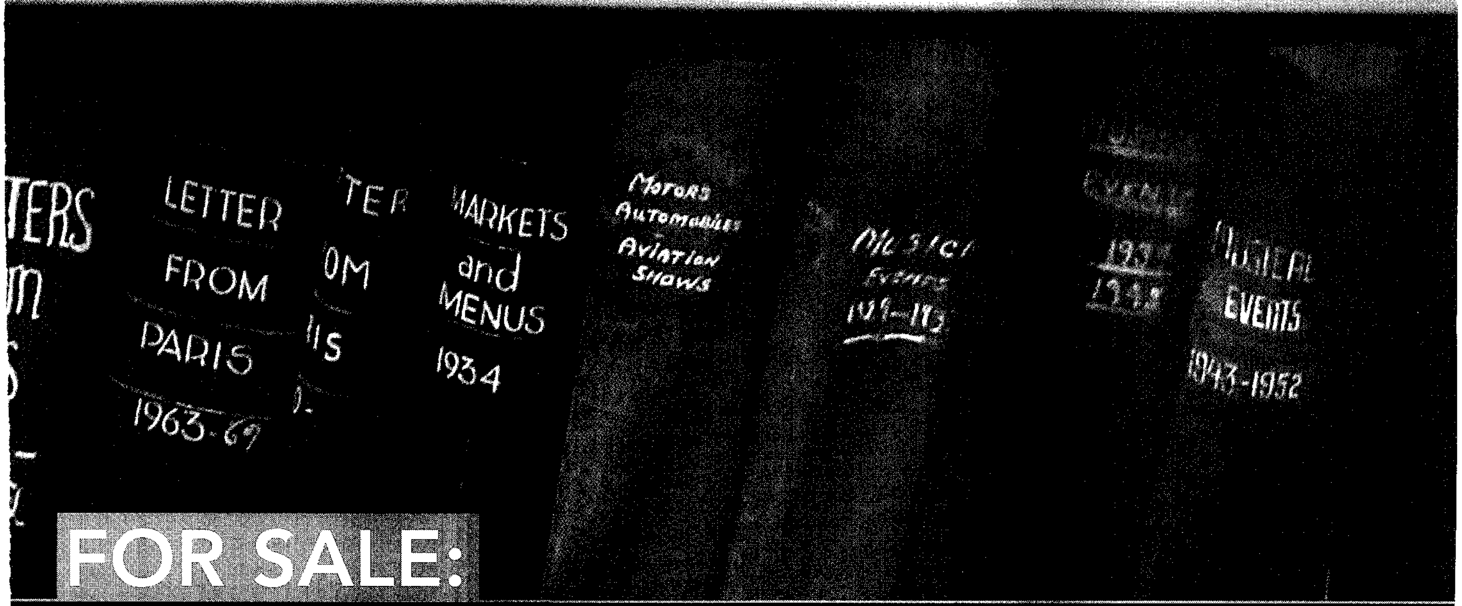
MICHAEL CRAWFORD

"In Ramallah today, a joyous celebration as hundreds of youths urinated on American flags, set tires on fire, and hurled rocks at a passing Icelandic diplomat in honor of Grandmother's Day.

"And, in Pakistan, yet more rioting to protest the lifting of a popular fatwa. The fatwa, issued last Ramadan by a Karachi imam, promised twice the number of kohl-eyed virgins in Paradise—seventy-two—to anyone who assassinated President Pervez Musharraf for his collaboration with the American crusaders. But last week the imam lifted the fatwa after taking coffee with Karen Hughes, she-devil envoy of the Salivating Hyena Little Bush. Sources tell Voice of the Caliphate that the coffee was laced with a powerful hallucinogenic drug of the type used on soldiers of the true faith by C.I.A. and Mossad interrogators at Abu Ghraib.

"And, from Guantánamo today, still another report that Muslim prisoners there are being subjected to barbaric tortures. The report, due out tomorrow from Martyrs Without Borders, the respected humanitarian agency, says these include being made to listen to 'Purimspiel' klezmer music twenty-four hours a day and being forced to watch the Barbra Streisand movie 'Yentl' while immersed up to the neck in chicken soup. Several prisoners have reportedly beheaded themselves rather than endure more of these unspeakable horrors.

"Coming up next, medical news: Could living in damp tunnels for long periods of time be affecting your sex life? We'll have a report from our medical correspondent, deep inside Tora Bora. And a report on farewell videos—is the camera you're using to record your teen-age suicide bomber's final goodbye getting the full picture? We'll have that, and our Martyr of the Week, when we return." ♦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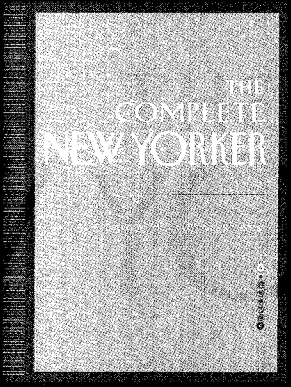
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OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

THE ZOMBIE HUNTERS

On the trail of cyberextortionists.

BY EVAN RATLIFF

One afternoon this spring, a half-dozen young computer engineers sat in the headquarters of Prolexic, an Internet-security company in Hollywood, Florida, puzzling over an attack on one of the company's clients, a penile-enhancement business called MensNiche.com. The engineers, gathered in the company's network operations center, or NOC, on the fourth floor of a new office building, were monitoring Internet traffic on fifty-inch wall-mounted screens. Anna Claiborne, one of the company's senior network engineers, wandered into the NOC in jeans and a T-shirt. The MensNiche attacker had launched an assault on the company's Web site at 4 A.M., and Claiborne had spent the night in the office fending it off. "Hence," she said, "I look like hell today."

MensNiche's problems had begun a week earlier, with a flood of fake data requests—what is known as a distributed denial-of-service attack—from computers around the world. Although few, if any, of those computers' owners knew it, their machines had been hijacked by hackers; they had become what programmers call "zombies," and had been set loose on MensNiche. The result was akin to what occurs when callers jam the phone lines during a television contest: with so many computers trying to connect, almost none could get through, and the company was losing business.

The first wave of the attack was easily filtered by Prolexic's automated system. The assailant then disguised his zombies as legitimate Web users, fooling the filters so well that Claiborne refused to tell me how it was done, for fear that others would adopt the same tactic. She spent the night examining the requests one by one as they scrolled by—interrogating each zombie, trying to find a key to the attacker's strategy.

Most of the computers' owners didn't know that they'd been hijacked.

JOHN RITTER

"He's clever, and he's been trying everything," Claiborne said. "If we ever find out who it is, seriously, I'd be willing to buy a plane ticket, fly over, and punch him in the face."

Prolexic, which was founded in 2003 by a twenty-seven-year-old college dropout named Barrett Lyon, is a twenty-four-hour, seven-days-a-week operation. An engineer is posted in the NOC at all times, to monitor Prolexic's four data hubs, which are in Phoenix, Vancouver, Miami, and London. The hubs contain powerful computers designed to absorb the brunt of data floods and are, essentially, massive holding pens for zombies. Any data travelling to Prolexic's clients pass through this hardware. The company, which had revenues of four million dollars in its first year, now has more than eighty customers.

Lyon's main business is protecting his clients from cyberextortionists, who demand payments from companies in return for leaving them alone. Although Lyon is based in Florida, the attackers he deals with might be in Kazakhstan or China, and they usually don't work alone.

"It's an insanely stressful job," Claiborne told me. "You are the middleman between people who are losing thousands or millions of dollars and somebody who really wants to make that person lose thousands or millions of dollars." When the monitors' graphs begin to spike, indicating that an attack is under way, she said, "it's like looking at the ocean and seeing a wall of water three hundred feet high coming toward you."

Only a few years ago, online malfeasance was largely the province of either technically adept hackers (or "crackers," as ill-intentioned hackers are known), who were in it for the thrill or for bragging rights, or novices (called "script kiddies"), who unleashed viruses as pranks. But as the Web's reach has expanded real-world criminals have discovered its potential. Mobsters and con men, from Africa to Eastern Europe, have gone online. Increasingly, cyberextortionists are tied to gangs that operate in several countries and hide within a labyrinth of anonymous accounts.

"When the attack starts, the ticker starts for that company," Lyon said. "It's a mental game that you've been playing, and if you make a mistake it causes the whole thing to go down. You are terrified."

Lyon, as usual, was wearing shorts and flip-flops. He has blond hair and a trim build, with narrow hazel eyes that were framed by dark circles of fatigue. A poster for the 1983 movie "WarGames"—a major influence—hung above his desk, on which were four computer monitors: one for writing program code, one for watching data traffic, one for surfing the Web, and one for chatting with customers. Lyon leaned over and showed me a program that he had created to identify the zombies attacking MensNiche. When he ran it, a list of countries scrolled up the screen: the United States, China, Cambodia, Haiti, even Iraq.

Examining the list of zombie addresses, Lyon picked one and ran a command called a "traceroute." The program followed the zombie's path from MensNiche back to a computer called NOCC.ior.navy.mil—part of the United States Navy's Network Operations Center for the Indian Ocean Region. "Well, that's great," he said, laughing. Lyon's next traceroute found that another zombie was on the Department of Defense's Military Sealift Command network. The network forces of the United States military had been conscripted in an attack on a Web site for penis enlargement.

Michael Alculumbre's first communication from the extortionists arrived on a Thursday evening in August, 2004. An e-mail message was sent to him just after 8 P.M. at Protx, an online-payment processing company based in London, where he is the chief executive officer. The subject line read, simply, "Contact us," and the return address—commerce_protection@yahoo.com—offered no clues to the message's origin. The note was cordial and succinct, written in stilted English. "Hello," it began. "We attack your servers for some time. If you want save your business, you should pay 10.000$ bank wire to our bank account. When we receive money, we stop attack immediately. If we will not receive money, we will attack your business 1 month." The note said that ten thousand dollars would buy Protx a year's worth of protection. "Think about how much money you lose, while your servers are down. Thanks John Martino." Alculumbre had never heard of John Martino. He decided to ignore the demand.

Two months later, Alculumbre's network technician called him at home. He said that customers were complaining that the system was off-line. By the time Alculumbre arrived at the office, the source of the disruption was clear. Thousands of computers were inundating Protx's Web site with fake data requests. Many of Protx's legitimate customers received the Internet equivalent of a busy signal—a message saying that the company's servers weren't responding.

Every minute that the Web site remained off-line, Protx's business suffered. As the company's engineers struggled to contain the attack, another ten-thousand-dollar e-mail demand arrived, this time signed "Tony Martino." Again, Alculumbre ignored it. He had received a call from an agent of the British National Hi-Tech Crime Unit, which had been monitoring the attack. The agent let him know that paying Martino wasn't an option; the extortionist would only return. Beyond that advice, there wasn't much that the N.H.T.C.U. could do to help. By the time Alculumbre's engineers were able to get the site running, it had been disabled for almost two days.

Alculumbre heard from Tony Martino again the following April, when he received a message offering a thousand-dollar-a-month protection-money payment plan. Before he could respond, an army of up to seventy thousand zombies ripped through Protx's defenses and knocked its Web site off-line. This time, it took Protx's engineers three days to fight off the attack.

The company now spends roughly five hundred thousand dollars a year to protect itself—fifty times what Martino had asked for. This includes a hundred-thousand-dollar-a-year security contract with Prolexic. Martino, it turned out, had been targeting Lyon's clients for months before he hit Protx.

"This is very similar to the pubs and clubs in London forty years ago that used to pay money to not have their premises smashed up," Mick Deats, the deputy head of the N.H.T.C.U., told me. "It's just a straight, old-fashioned protection racket, with a completely new method." The cyberextortionists also make use of an elaborate money-laundering system, Deats said. "They have companies regis-

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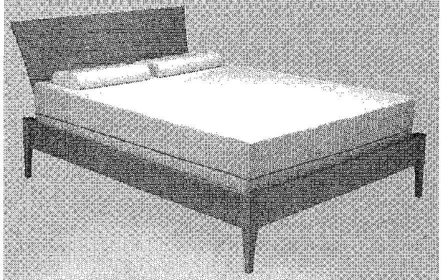

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tered all over the place, passing the money through them."

"I started prosecuting network-attack cases in 1992, and back then it was more the sort of lone hackers," said Christopher Painter, the deputy chief of the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section at the Department of Justice. Today, he says, "you have organized criminal groups that are adopting technical sophistication."

The most potent weapon for Web gangsters is the botnet. A bot, broadly speaking, is a remote-controlled software program that is installed on a computer without the owner's knowledge. Hackers use viruses, worms, or automated programs to scan the Internet in search of potential zombies. One recent study found that a new P.C., attached to the Internet without protective software, will on average be infected in about twenty minutes.

In the most common scenario, the bots surreptitiously connect hundreds, or thousands, of zombies to a channel in a chat room. The process is called "herding," and a herd of zombies is called a botnet. The herder then issues orders to the zombies, telling them to send unsolicited e-mail, steal personal information, or launch attacks. Herders also trade, rent, and sell their zombies. "The botnet is the little engine that makes the evil of the Internet work," Chris Morrow, a senior network-security engineer at M.C.I., said. "It makes spam work. It makes identity fraud work. It makes extortion, in this case, work."

Less than five years ago, experts considered a several-thousand-zombie botnet extraordinary. Lyon now regularly faces botnets of fifty thousand zombies or more. According to one study, fifteen per cent of new zombies are from China. A British Internet-security firm, Clearswift, recently predicted that "botnets will, unless matters change dramatically, proliferate to the point where much of the Internet . . . comes to resemble a mosaic of botnets." Meanwhile, the resources of law enforcement are limited—the N.H.T.C.U., for example, has sixty agents handling everything from child pornography to identity theft.

Extortionists often prefer to target online industries, such as pornography and gambling, that occupy a gray area, and may be reluctant to seek help from law enforcement. Such businesses account for most of Prolexic's clients. I asked Lyon how he felt about the companies he defended. "Everybody makes a living somehow," he said. "It's not my job to worry about how they do it."

I asked whether that applied to extortionists as well. After a pause, he said, "I guess I'm partial to dot-commers."

Several weeks later, he called me to say that he'd reconsidered his answer. "The Internet is all about connecting things, communicating and sharing information, bits, pieces of data," he said. "A denial-of-service attack is the exact opposite of that. It is taking one person's will and imposing it on a bunch of others." In any case, Lyon added, his clients now included mainstream businesses—a Japanese game company, foreign-exchange traders, and a multibillion-dollar corporation that wanted to have additional security in the days before its I.P.O.

Lyon first gained a measure of online fame in 2003, with a project called Opte, in which he created a visual map of the entire Internet—its backbone, transfer points, major servers. After reading that a similar project had taken several months to complete, he bet a friend that he could do it in a day, and won. (A gorgeously rendered print of the map—which Lyon licenses free of charge—appeared in a travelling exhibition on the future of design.)

Lyon's obsessive interest in computer networks began early. In the third grade at a Sacramento, California, private school for learning-disabled children—Prolexic's name derives from Lyon's pride in overcoming severe dyslexia—he and a friend hacked a simple computer game. In junior high school, Lyon discovered the Internet, and with a friend, Peter Avalos, he soon founded a company called TheShell.com, which provided accounts to chat-room users. But his grades suffered, and, after high school, he failed a year's worth of classes at California State University at Chico.

When a friend he met online, Robert Brown, offered Lyon a job at his computer-security company, Network Presence, he quit school and took it. Brown sent him off to secure the network of a large insurance company in the Midwest. Lyon was nineteen and, he said, "I looked thirteen. So I wore a suit every day, and I worked my ass off for those guys." He burned out after two years—"I didn't know you had to meter yourself"—and returned to school, this time at California State University at Sacramento. There, Lyon signed up for philosophy classes, dumped his computers in a closet, and joined the rowing team. But he couldn't get away from computers entirely; he still took assignments from his old employer, and he and Avalos (who graduated from the United States Naval Academy and has recently returned from flying P-3s in Iraq) continued to operate TheShell.com. The company's clients tended to be advanced Internet users, and this had the effect of bringing the site to the attention of hackers. At one point, Lyon was fighting off several zombie attacks a day.

In August, 2002, Dana Corbo, the C.E.O. of Don Best Sports, called Network Presence for help. Don Best, which is based in Las Vegas, is a kind of Bloomberg for the gambling world, providing betting lines for both real-world and online casinos. The company had ignored an e-mailed extortion demand for two hundred thousand dollars, and it was under attack. Network Presence sent Lyon.

The next day, Lyon and another engineer flew to Las Vegas and helped Don Best's engineers set up powerful new servers. Lyon's strategy worked: the attackers gave up. Corbo treated them to a night out in Vegas, with dinner in front of the Bellagio fountains. (He also paid Network Presence a fee.)

Lyon still wanted to find out who was behind the attacks. He and Brown scanned the traffic data, found a zombie, and, thanks to an opening in Microsoft Windows, were able to see what other computers it had been connected to. This led them to a chat server in Kazakhstan; when they connected to it, they saw more attacks in progress. They notified the F.B.I. and the Secret Service, but, Brown said, "they sort of threw up their arms, because it was in Kazakhstan." To Lyon, however, the lesson was clear: with clever techniques and a little luck, any attacker could be found.

In the late spring of 2003, Mickey Richardson, the general manager of BetCRIS, a Costa Rican-based gambling firm, received an extortion e-mail. (Online bookmaking, which is illegal in the United States, has flourished in Costa Rica and the Caribbean since the mid-nineteen-nineties.) The letter requested five hundred dollars in eGold—an online currency—and was followed by an attack that crippled BetCRIS's Web site, its main source of revenue. Richardson couldn't afford to have the site disabled. He paid the five hundred dollars.

The extortionists began hitting other offshore bookmakers. One firm after another paid up, anywhere from three thousand to thirty-five thousand dollars, which they wired to addresses in Russia and Latvia. Richardson expected that he, too, would be hit again. He heard about Don Best's successful defense and called Lyon. But Lyon was back in school, and reluctant to take the job. Instead, he told Richardson to buy a server that was specially designed to filter out attacks. "The box," as Richardson called it, cost about twenty thousand dollars. Over the phone, Lyon helped Richardson's information-technology manager, Glenn Lebumfacil, configure it.

A few months later, Richardson got another e-mail from the extortionists. It arrived just before Thanksgiving, one of the busiest betting periods of the year, and it asked for forty thousand dollars. The e-mail said:

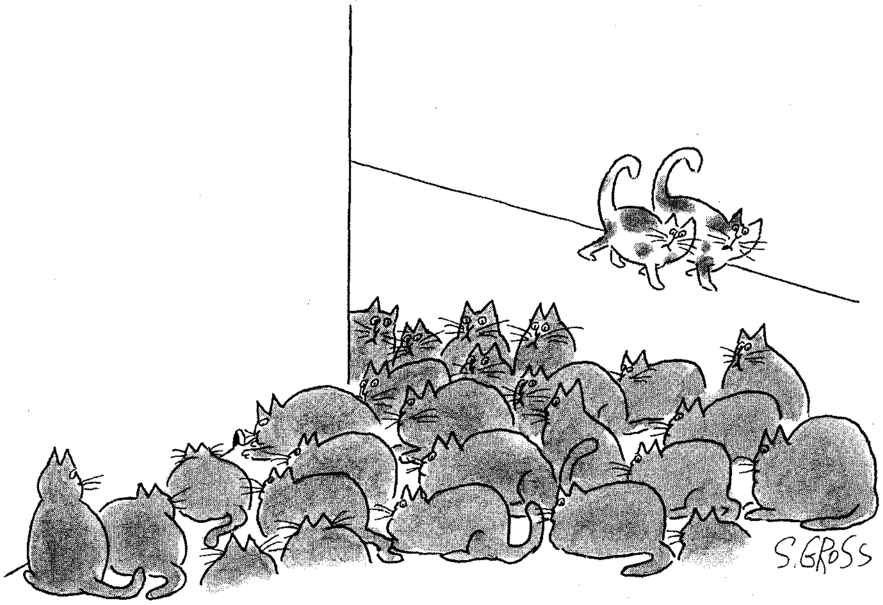
> If you choose not to pay for our help, then you will probably not be in business much longer, as you will be under attack each weekend for the next 20 weeks, or until you close your doors.

Richardson believed that he had "everything in place to protect the store," and he refused to pay.

When the attack came, it took less than twenty minutes to overwhelm the box. The data flood brought down both BetCRIS and its Internet service provider. After a few days of trying in vain to make the box work, Lebumfacil called Lyon in a panic. "Hey, man, remember that thing you set up for us?" he said. "It just got blown away."

Lyon saw a business opportunity. He quit school again and started a company, with BetCRIS as his first customer. He knew that he couldn't just add capacity to BetCRIS's system to capture the zombies, as he had with Don Best, because Costa Rica wasn't wired for that sort of system—there wasn't enough capacity in the entire country. So he decided to build his own network in the United States and use it to draw the attackers away from BetCRIS. The extortionists would think they were attacking a relatively defenseless system in Central America but would find themselves up against Lyon's machines instead.

Richardson, meanwhile, was stalling for time with the extortionists, claiming a medical emergency. "I guess you did not take my warning seriously," came the reply. "The excuse that you were in



"He's become quite a cult figure."

the hospital does not matter to me." The correspondence became increasingly belligerent. "Sorry moron but I am just having so much fun fucking with you," one e-mail said, raising the price to sixty thousand dollars. Richardson responded by offering the extortionists jobs in BetCRIS's I.T. department. "I appreciate the offer to do work for you, but we are completely booked until the football season is over," one of them replied.

As Lyon brought his system online, the confrontation turned into a chess match. "Every time Barrett would change something, these guys would change something else," Brian Green, the C.E.O. of Digital Solutions, BetCRIS's Internet service provider, said. "They threw wrenches, they threw everything they could at BetCRIS."

Finally, after three weeks, the attacker gave up. "I bet you feel real stupid that you did not keep your word," he wrote. "I figure by now you have lost 5 times what we asked and by the end of the year your decision will cost you more than 20 times what we asked." Richardson says that those numbers may not have been far off.

By then, everyone in the insular gaming world seemed to have heard that Lyon could stop zombie attacks, and he was getting calls from Jamaica, Costa Rica, and Panama. "It was kind of like stumbling into this strange little community in the middle of nowhere, where everybody worships a weird stone," Lyon said. "They all had superstitions about when they were going to be attacked."

Lyon decided, once again, to trace the source of the attack. He and Dayton Turner, a goateed twenty-four-year-old engineer he had hired, allowed one of their own machines to become a zombie and watched as it was drawn into the botnet; by early January they had found the chat channel that controlled the zombies.

Logging on as "hardcore," Turner pretended to be a bot herder who had been out of the game for a while. "i want to get back into it," he wrote. "i ha[v]e a small group of zombies so far which is why i came back looking." Turner had spent years in chat rooms, and communicated easily in the emoticon-heavy shorthand common to hackers. He gradually ingratiated himself with a Russian who called himself eXe and often logged in from a server that he'd named "exe.is.wanted.by.the.FBI.gov." Other members were not so welcoming; when Turner wrote, "i wanna help," one of them, uhdfed, replied, "WE don't need ur HELP," and set his zombies on him. But Lyon and Turner kept returning, establishing their technical credibility and becoming a part of the scene.

They continued the ruse for weeks, occasionally with an F.B.I. agent on the phone helping to direct the conversation. As bait, Turner described a program he had written that would help eXe to collect zombies, which he promised to give him as soon as he could rewrite it in a different programming language. "It was a matter of simply befriending the guy and making him think that he could trust us," Lyon said. Piece by piece, eXe revealed himself:

hardcore: its pretty cold here right now, what's russia like? hehe
eXe: i'm good
eXe: something hot
eXe: =)
eXe: Russia is like the Russian Vodka=)
hardcore: hehehe
eXe: u give me code?

At one point, during an exchange about the number of computers each had infected, eXe asked Turner how old he was. Turner replied that he was twenty-three, and added, "How about you? :)." eXe told him that he was a twenty-one-year-old Russian student named Ivan. Turner said that his name was Matt and he lived in Canada. Then, trying to provoke a confession, he told Ivan that he made money from extortion: "They always pay because they want their business back and they don't want to admit they have a weakness... stupid Americans."

Turner then asked Ivan about a specific attack: "I figured it would be you since you have so many bots :P."

"Good idea... hehe," Ivan replied.

Before they signed off, Ivan wrote, "Bye friend."

In February, 2004, Lyon and Turner submitted a thirty-six-page report to the F.B.I. and the N.H.T.C.U., outlining their profile of Ivan and their correspondence with his crew. At this point, they were operating as DigiDefense International, which Lyon had founded, hiring Turner and Lebumfacil as his first employees. At the company's temporary headquarters, in an office building in Costa Rica, paranoia about reprisals from Russian mobsters reigned, even though there were armed guards in the

WAITING FOR THE SUN TO SET

These rows of tall palm trees,
White villas, and white hotels
Fronting the beach and the sea
Seem most improbable to me

Whiling away the afternoon
In a cane rocking chair
On a small, secluded veranda,
Overrun with exotic flowers

I don't even know the names of,
Raised as I was by parents
Who kept the curtains drawn,
The lights low, the stove unlit

Leaving me as wary as they'd be
At first seeing oranges in a tree,
Women going bare-breasted
Over pink sand in the blue dusk.

—*Charles Simic*

lobby. Meanwhile, Lyon and Turner kept chatting with Ivan.

A few weeks later, on a Saturday in March, Ivan slipped up: he logged in to the chat room without disguising his home Internet address. The same day, Turner happened to be online, and decided to look up eXe's registration information. To his astonishment, he found what appeared to be a real name, address, and phone number: Ivan Maksakov, of Saratov, Russia. Lyon dashed off an e-mail to the authorities with the subject line "eXe made a HUGE mistake!"

A few months later, the Russian police, accompanied by agents from the N.H.T.C.U., swept into Maksakov's home, where they found him sitting at his computer. In television footage of the arrest, Maksakov looks like a clean-cut kid, with brown hair and a teen-ager's face. He sits glumly on his bed in shorts and a T-shirt as the police rummage through his room and carry out his equipment. The video shows the officers walking him to the local station and slamming the door shut on his cell.

In simultaneous raids in St. Petersburg and Stavropol, the police picked up four other Russians whom the N.H.T.C.U. had traced by setting up a sting at a bank in Riga, Latvia, where a British company that was coöperating with the authorities had been directed to send its payment. "We were waiting for people to come pick the money up," Mick Deats, of the N.H.T.C.U., told me. "But that didn't happen immediately. What did happen was that the bad guys we were watching picked up lots of *different* payments—not ours. We were seeing them pick up Australian dollars, U.S. dollars, and denominations from all over the world. And we're thinking, Whose money is that?"

The N.H.T.C.U. has never explicitly credited Prolexic's engineers with Maksakov's arrest. "The identification of the offenders in this came about through a number of lines of inquiry," Deats said. "Prolexic's was one of them, but not the only one." In retrospect, Lyon said, "The N.H.T.C.U. and the F.B.I. were kind of using us. The agents aren't allowed to do an Nmap, a port scan"—techniques that he and Dayton Turner had used to find Ivan's zombies. "It's not illegal; it's just a little intrusive. And then we had to yank the zombie software off a computer, and the F.B.I. turned a blind eye to that. They kind of said, 'We can't tell you to do that—we can't even suggest it. But if that data were to come to us we wouldn't complain.' We could do things outside of their jurisdiction." He added that although his company still maintained relationships with law-enforcement agencies, they had grown more cautious about accepting help.

When the authorities picked up Ivan Maksakov, he was one semester away from graduation at a technical college in Saratov. He spent five months in prison before being released on bail, and now awaits trial. According to the authorities, he was a lower-level operative in the gang, which paid him about two thousand dollars a month for his services. A source close to the investigation told me that Maksakov, who faces fifteen years in jail, is coöperating with the Russian police.

One afternoon in Prolexic's offices, I asked Turner if he had felt a sense of justice when Ivan was arrested. "I suppose," he said halfheartedly. "It was a difficult situation for me when I saw his picture, because I kind of felt for the kid. He wasn't necessarily a bad kid." Perhaps, Turner told me, Ivan had "just said, 'Let's see if it works. Hey, it works, and people pay me for it.' "

Lyon, too, was one semester from graduation when he dropped out of college to start his company. He was, in his own way, unable to resist the challenge, and he, too, had discovered that people would pay him for what he did. I asked him if he'd ever done anything illegal on the Net. He thought for a minute, and then told me that once, as a teen-ager, he had poked around and discovered a vulnerability at Network Solutions, the company that at the time registered all the Web's addresses. "I went in and manipulated some domain names," he said. "A month later, I got a call from somebody with a badge," who had traced the intrusion back to Lyon's computer.

In the end, Lyon said, the authorities let it go. Those were simpler times. "I was scared shitless, but I learned my lesson," he said. "If something like that happened now, I can't imagine what would happen to me." ♦

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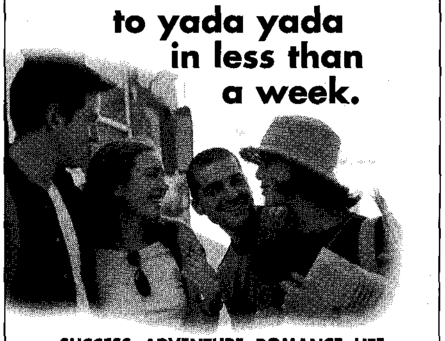

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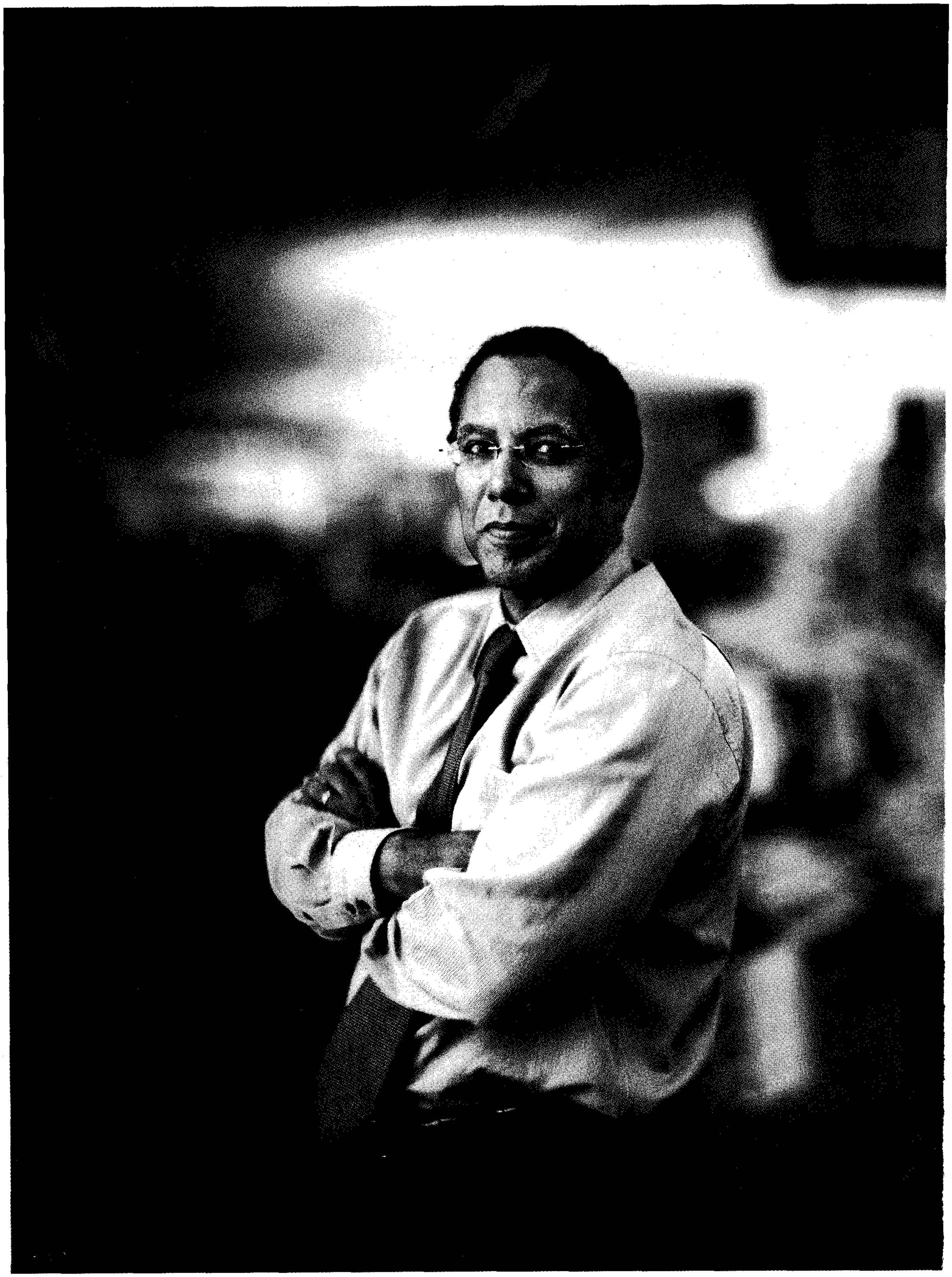


“It’s not always our job to give readers what they want,” Dean Baquet, who left the New York Times *for Los Angeles, says. Photogra*

David Burnett.

ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

FAULT LINE

Can the Los Angeles Times survive its owners?

BY KEN AULETTA

By the morning of July 20th, after months of gossip, everyone in the third-floor newsroom of the Los Angeles *Times* knew that John S. Carroll, who had been the newspaper's editor for five years, was going to resign. Through the large glass window of the conference room, the staff could see Carroll, along with the senior editors and the publisher, Jeffrey Johnson, who had rarely appeared in the newsroom. They all looked sombre. A few minutes after the meeting adjourned, the staff assembled at the national desk, across from Carroll's office, to hear Johnson confirm that Carroll was indeed leaving.

Tension between Carroll and the Tribune Company, the newspaper's Chicago-based owner, had been growing for a couple of years; Carroll, who is sixty-three and had edited three newspapers, was expected to leave soon, in any case. The departure ceremony was brief; the speakers relied on cliché and euphemism to get through the ordeal. History, the publisher said, would look at Carroll's stewardship as an "incredibly special period"—a reference to the fact that the newspaper had won thirteen Pulitzer Prizes since Carroll's arrival. Carroll, who speaks in a monotone, with a trace of a North Carolina drawl, said, "There have been any number of factors in my consideration, and I'm not going to go into them all." Having worked in newspapers his entire adult life, he'd decided it was time to move on, he said. "Leaving is always hard, and this is hard for me." Carroll then hugged Dean Baquet, the managing editor, whom he had hired not long after he came to the *Times.*

Carroll didn't say much else. When *Newsweek* asked him if the Tribune Company appreciated the journalism of the *Times*, he said, "I want to be candid with you, but I'm going to have to duck on that one." But, to anyone who had followed Carroll's career, and knew about his problems with the newspaper's owners, the reply was in fact candid. As he later told me, he had grown weary of "incessant cost-cutting" by the Tribune Company. He believed that, on the contrary, investing in the newspaper would eventually produce higher profits, which was what the company eagerly sought, and that cutting costs, while it would temporarily improve the bottom line, would erode the paper and might someday destroy it. Carroll and the Tribune Company had been arguing about these issues for five years. The resolution would now be left to his successor.

In March, 2000, the Tribune Company paid $8.3 billion to buy the hundred-and-sixteen-year-old Times Mirror Company from its controlling shareholders, the Chandler family, who received cash and stock and were awarded four of the sixteen seats on the Tribune board. In addition to the L.A. *Times*, the purchase gave the Tribune Company control of *Newsday,* on Long Island; the Baltimore *Sun;* and the Hartford *Courant*, among other assets, bringing the total number of Tribune daily newspapers to eleven. (Tribune's holdings also include twenty-six television stations; the Chicago Cubs; a quarter of the WB network and a regional sports network; a third of the Food Network; and a television entertainment division.) The biggest prize in this new acquisition was the *Times*, which became the company's largest and most prestigious newspaper. This was something of a sore point in Chicago—the Chicago *Tribune*, founded in 1847, was the company's flagship but had little more than half the readership of the *Times.*

In Los Angeles, the newsroom initially welcomed the new ownership. Five months earlier, the paper had been deeply embarrassed when it was revealed that the Times Mirror C.E.O.,

CONTACT

Mark H. Willes, a former executive with General Mills, and the newspaper's publisher, Kathryn Downing, had entered into a profit-sharing partnership with the new Staples Center, a sports and entertainment arena, and had then published a special edition of the *Times*' Sunday magazine devoted to the center's opening. The arrangement, which was kept secret from the paper's editor until shortly before publication, gave Staples Center half the advertising revenues for this supposedly independent journalistic enterprise. The *Times* and its top management had been humiliated, and the Tribune Company seemed to promise a new era.

There was optimism in Chicago, too. Ann Marie Lipinski, the editor of the *Tribune*, said, "For the most part, the print journalists were happy that the company was laying down a major bet on the viability of these things we love," meaning newspapers, at a time when "people were looking to divest themselves" of newspapers.

Like most newspaper companies in the United States, the Tribune Company has to confront not only declining circulation and disappointing advertising sales but a belief on Wall Street that newspapers are a poor investment. While the population of the United States increased by sixty-four per cent between 1960 and 2004, daily newspaper circulation dropped by 3.7 million—to just over fifty-five million. There is something almost prehistoric about using expensive newsprint and elaborate delivery systems, to homes and newsstands, in the age of the Internet.

These concerns have affected newsrooms everywhere. Recently, the New York Times Company announced that it would reduce its workforce by five hundred, including about four per cent of the newsroom at the *Times* and six per cent at the Boston *Globe;* Knight Ridder said that it would cut fifteen per cent of the newsroom staff at the Philadelphia *Inquirer* and at the San Jose *Mercury News*. The afternoon newspaper in Birmingham, Alabama, announced in late September that it was going out of business, and the Tribune Company is cutting forty-five newsroom jobs at *Newsday*. Personnel reductions have become as common in newsrooms as they are in American factories.

In Chicago, the reasons for buying Times Mirror were clear. There were opportunities "for significant cost savings at the Los Angeles *Times*," and larger profits, according to Jack Fuller, who was then the president of Tribune Publishing. Fuller pointed out that "by buying the *Times* we had television stations and newspapers in the three largest markets in the country"—Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago—and, he added, "the papers were really just excellent newspapers." Not much was said then about a concern expressed by David Laventhol, who was the president of Times Mirror from 1987 to 1993, that "the people who decide the fate of Los Angeles's newspaper now live in Chicago."

Fuller's first task was to restore credibility to the *Times* after the Staples debacle, and that led him to John Carroll, who at that time was the editor of the Baltimore *Sun*. Fuller had met Carroll when they served on a Pulitzer Prize board and knew that he was seen as someone who improved newspapers and was uncommonly popular with the reporters and editors he worked with.

Carroll was aware that the profit plans of media chains could conflict with the goals of journalists, but he wanted to believe that the Tribune Company saw, as he did, that investing in staff and resources would pay dividends in readership. Carroll thought he understood Fuller. Fuller, after all, had started out as a Chicago *Tribune* copyboy at the age of sixteen. He became a reporter, and eventually took over the editorial page, winning a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing; he rose to become the paper's editor and then the publisher.

Carroll had a particular interest in investigative reporting. In the nineteen-seventies, he had worked for Eugene Roberts, the editor of the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, and had expanded the paper's investigative coverage. A series on detectives who brutalized suspects to win confessions earned a Pulitzer Prize—one of seventeen Pulitzers that the *Inquirer* won under Roberts. In 1979, Carroll became the editor of the Lexington, Kentucky, *Herald* (now the *Herald-Leader*). At the Baltimore *Sun*, which Carroll took over in 1991, he undertook such ambitious projects as sending reporters to southern Sudan, to expose the country's slave trade. Michael Pakenham, who had been the *Sun's* book editor, and had also worked with Carroll at the *Inquirer*, said, "He had a profound sense of the newspaper being a set of integrated parts, but the parts had to be made excellent on their own. He wanted the Baltimore *Sun* to be the best large regional paper in the country."

Carroll, though, was not happy with the direction of Times Mirror, the *Sun's* owner, under Mark Willes, and his situation reminded him of what had happened to Gene Roberts, who quit the *Inquirer* in 1990 after losing too many battles with corporate executives at Knight Ridder. "You really got the impression that you were governed by the fluctuations in the stock price," Roberts told me, recalling that time. By 2000, Carroll was ready for a change, and he expected to become the head of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism, at Harvard. It was at about that point that Fuller called and asked him to come to Los Angeles.

At the *Times,* Carroll's first priority was to hire a managing editor, and he chose someone he had never met: Dean Baquet, the national editor of the New York *Times*. Baquet, who is African-American, was the fourth of five brothers raised in a working-class New Orleans neighborhood. His family lived in the back of a Creole restaurant that his father opened after giving up a job as a mailman. The first time Baquet travelled outside Louisiana was when he went North to attend Columbia University. After his sophomore year, he got a summer internship at the *States-Item,* an afternoon paper in New Orleans—an experience he liked so much that he dropped out of Columbia. He spent seven years in New Orleans and in 1984 was hired by the Chicago *Tribune*, where he and Ann Marie Lipinski shared a Pulitzer Prize for uncovering corruption on the City Council. After six years at the *Tribune,* he was recruited by the New York *Times* as an investigative reporter.

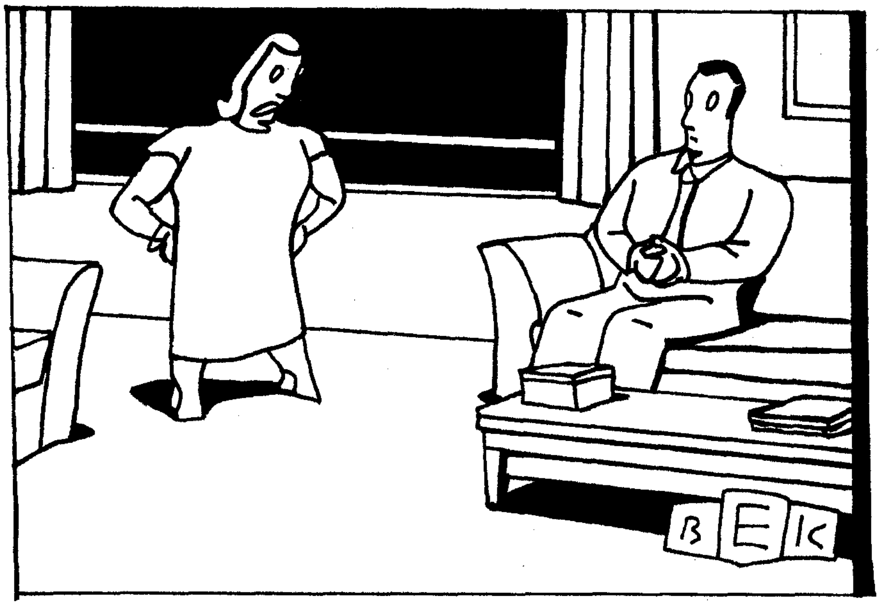
Baquet, who is forty-nine, says that he did not aspire to be an editor, but he was encouraged to make the change by Joseph Lelyveld, the *Times'* executive editor, who had helped bring him to the paper. "I hated it for the first year, and then I started to like it," he says. He started as the deputy Metro editor and was soon promoted to national editor. Newsrooms are notorious for their competition and backbiting, and few editors escape the atmosphere of complaint and resentment. Baquet succeeded. Douglas Franz, a close friend who worked under him, said, "The national desk was situated in the middle of the third-floor newsroom, and I sat a few feet away from it for five years. It was the happiest place in that often dismal building, a desk where editors joked and reporters liked to drop by, rather than slink past. And it was because of Dean." With patience, Baquet might have won the most powerful job in newspapers—the editorship of the New York *Times.*

Baquet recalls that he was torn about accepting the offer from Carroll. His wife, Dylan, did not want to leave New York, and he felt loyal to Lelyveld. "I'm not a careerist, but I did look at what the next job for me would be at the New York *Times*," Baquet told me. "I was too young to be a candidate for anything but assistant managing editor. I just thought, Would my next job at the New York *Times* be as fun as being the managing editor for John?" In addition—although he claims that the subject "never came up"—since Carroll was fifty-seven, Baquet said, "I assumed that if things went well I would succeed him."

Carroll, who has white hair, a square jaw, and a wry expression that rarely changes, is hardly in the charismatic mold of Ben Bradlee. Rather, much like Gene Roberts, he led with an almost gnomic intelligence. James Rainey, a media writer who joined the paper in 1984, says of Carroll, "He got as much done here by silence. At meetings, when he had heard enough he walked out or started typing on his computer." Carroll disliked business-management meetings. If an editor or a reporter needed him, his door was open, but to others he would sometimes say, "Is it a crisis? If not, let's talk next week."

Martin Gottlieb, the associate managing editor of the New York *Times* and Baquet's closest friend in New York, says that Baquet has enormous empathy for people; he thinks that this quality comes from having a close-knit family, and particularly from the pain of watching his oldest brother die as a result of years of heavy drinking and smoking. Baquet attributes it to his early days as a reporter writing about people he knew in New Orleans; a local black political organization was so upset with corruption stories he did that it boycotted his father's restaurant. One exposé led to the arrest of the sister of a close friend. "It's an experience that reporters don't have much anymore, where you cover the town you live in and see the impact of your stories," Baquet said to me. "It's harder to see people as black and white. I don't mean racially. I mean good guys and bad guys." He added, "You learn fairness when you have to face the guys you write about the next day."

Doyle McManus, the Washington bureau chief of the L.A. *Times,* says of Carroll and Baquet, "They were a terrific Mutt-and-Jeff act. They did distinctly different things. John was General Mar-



"Yes, you'll do it? Or yes, you wish I were dead?"

shall and Dean was General Eisenhower." Baquet "was in my office ten times a day," the national editor, Scott Kraft, said. "John would pay a lot of attention to a few stories, and delegate the rest. Dean likes to be involved in every aspect of the coverage." Kit Rachlis, a *Times* alumnus who is now the editor of the magazine *Los Angeles,* and who admired what Carroll and Baquet were doing, said that Baquet has difficulty making hard decisions about personnel and delivering bad news.

With the support of the *Times'* publisher, John Puerner, who was highly regarded by the Tribune Company, Carroll and Baquet made major changes over the next five years. They replaced ten of the fourteen editors on the paper's masthead. The Orange County bureau, which had employed about two hundred people, now employs fewer than twenty; most of the staff was moved to other sections. (Orange County was scaled back, Baquet says, because "it was marketing; it wasn't journalism.") They expanded the Washington bureau from fifty-five to sixty-one people, which made it second in size only to that of the New York *Times;* and they spent millions of dollars covering Iraq. The paper has twenty-four overseas bureaus—three more than the Washington *Post.* They doubled the number of investigative reporters. Vernon Loeb, a strong investigative reporter at the *Post,* was hired as Metro investigations editor, with a team of ten reporters to supervise.

The paper aggressively pursued investigative stories. Five days before the recall election for California's governor, the *Times* published a story revealing that the Republican candidate, Arnold Schwarzenegger, had sometimes groped women during his acting career. Better to publish now, Carroll reasoned, than "explain lamely to our readers after Election Day why we had withheld the story." Some conservatives saw a liberal bias behind the Schwarzenegger articles and the timing of their publication. More than a thousand readers cancelled their subscriptions. A series on the Martin Luther King, Jr./Drew Medical Center—headlined "DEADLY ERRORS AND POLITICS BETRAY A HOSPITAL'S PROMISE"—singled out the hospital's leadership, which was African-American. The series, which won a Pulitzer Prize, was denounced by black community leaders. The newspaper was willing to commit considerable time and money to a single story, and a November, 2003, series on Wal-Mart's business practices—reported from Asia and Central America, as well as from the United States—remains the definitive newspaper study of the subject; it won another Pulitzer for the *Times.*

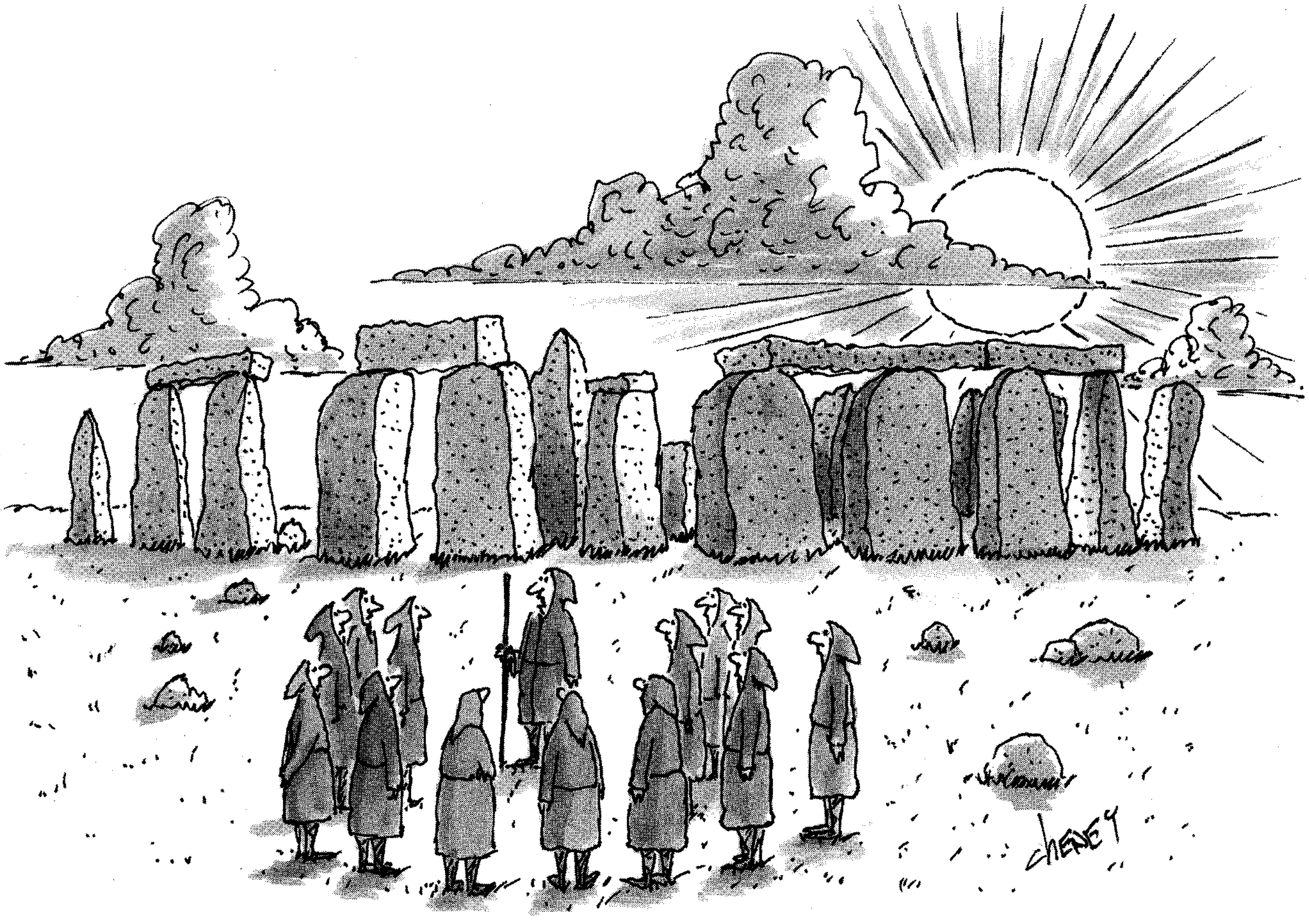
For years, under the Chandlers, the *Times* was known as a "cops and courts" paper, although it tried to cover the nation and the world, and often did it well. Carroll and Baquet's obsession with matching America's best newspapers came at the expense of local coverage. The problem was compounded when they hired an editor from *Newsday* to oversee the California section and staffed the local desk with relatively inexperienced reporters, who viewed local news as a path to Washington or overseas assignments. (However, the staff did win a Pulitzer last year for its coverage of the ruinous brush fires that swept through the area.) One veteran reporter, Bill Boyarsky, who had spent his career covering California, accepted early retirement, which cost the *Times* some authority. "We've lost a lot of experience," Leo Wolinsky, the deputy managing editor, who runs the daily page-one meeting, said. Last year, Janet Clayton, a Californian who had been the editorial-page editor, was made assistant managing editor for state and local news. Still, Baquet said, "we haven't mastered making the paper feel like it is edited in Los Angeles."

The geography of Los Angeles has never been ideally suited to newspapers. People do not commute on subways, where the morning paper is a daily companion. The readership area is unusually diffuse. The city's five counties encompass nearly thirty-four thousand square miles—which is about the size of Indiana. The area now has more residents, 17.5 million, than all of Florida. The *Times* prints five zoned editions, but the diversity of the population makes it difficult to create an identity. The most recent census reported that there were over three million more nonwhites than whites living in Southern California; nearly forty per cent of the population is Latino. More than a dozen daily newspapers and numerous weeklies compete for the attention of readers.

Nothing was less locally minded than Carroll's decision, in April, 2004, to hire Michael Kinsley as the editorial and opinion editor, which gave the paper a national voice, approval among the chattering classes on the East Coast, and an innovative editor. But Kinsley spent half his time working from Seattle, where he lives, and so, unlike most editorial-page editors, he was not particularly visible in the community. Kinsley delegated that part of the job to Andrés Martinez, whom he recruited in September from the New York *Times.*

The first serious trouble between Carroll and corporate management came in 2003, when, to meet its profit goals, the Tribune Company decided to cut expenditures. To spare newsroom jobs, Carroll agreed to cut the amount of space designated for news. (Between 2001 and 2005, the weekly news hole shrank by more than fifty pages.) The company also pressed Carroll and Baquet to run stories from the other Tribune-owned newspapers, a change that the editors resisted. "If we decide that we're not going to cover the world ourselves, we'll become a second-tier paper," Carroll said. He believes that the New York *Times,* the Washington *Post,* and the *Wall Street Journal* are America's best newspapers, because they are controlled by families—the Sulzbergers, the Grahams, and the Bancrofts, respectively—who value the quality of their papers above short-term financial performance.

The Tribune Company also wanted to consolidate the Washington bureaus of its newspapers. When Jack Fuller first raised the idea, Doyle McManus recalled, he said that he wanted the bureaus "to work together to find ways to eliminate needless duplication of effort,"



"Now that we can tell time, I'd like to suggest that we begin imposing deadlines."

• •

and to operate under one roof. Fuller assured Tribune Company editors that consolidation would not mean eliminating separate bureaus, as Knight Ridder had done. Still, Fuller's request worried Carroll, who was tired of dealing with Chicago, and he asked Baquet to attend more budget reviews and management meetings. Baquet and an old friend, James O'Shea, the managing editor of the Chicago *Tribune*, came up with a compromise, accepted by Doyle McManus, under which the *Times* would gradually reduce its Washington bureau by six people. Deeper cuts were later made in the Washington bureaus of *Newsday* and the Baltimore *Sun*. But Carroll suspected—rightly, as it turned out—that this was only the start of a bigger campaign to cut jobs and resources.

Baquet, who shared Carroll's concerns, thought about leaving the paper in 2003. The New York *Times* had fired Howell Raines as executive editor in June, and Joe Lelyveld had returned on an interim basis. The *Times* was scouting for a successor, and on June 15th the *Times'* publisher, Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., and Lelyveld flew to Los Angeles to take Baquet to dinner. "I made it clear to them that I probably would not take the job if they offered it to me, but they didn't offer it to me," Baquet recalls. The conversation with New York continued, though, and Baquet talked over the prospect with Carroll. Baquet's son was settled in school, his wife's parents had moved to California, and he was devoted to Carroll and the staff they had built. He said that he telephoned Sulzberger a week later and took his name out of consideration. The job eventually went, as many expected, to Bill Keller.

There was a sense that Carroll and Baquet were not spending enough time communicating with the Tribune Company. Carroll's strengths—editing stories and recruiting talent—"were also his weaknesses," Leo Wolinsky told me. "He was an old-fashioned editor who did not want to engage with his corporate bosses." Vernon Loeb, who had once worked with Carroll at the *Inquirer*, believes that Carroll inherited Gene Roberts's view that a newspaper is perpetually at war with its corporate parent. Loeb was wary of Chicago, but he felt that the company deserved credit for hiring Carroll and Baquet and for supporting investigative teams, including his own.

In April of 2004, the *Times* received five Pulitzer Prizes, the most ever won by the paper. To the surprise of the reporters and editors, Tribune executives did not praise the *Times* in any sort of public communiqué. "You can't turn on your computer here without getting a missive from Dennis FitzSimons"—the Tribune Company's C.E.O.—"yet there was nothing. Nothing!" Tim Rutten, the associate features editor and a media columnist at the *Times*, told me.

And no executives from the Tribune Company attended the awards ceremony, at Columbia University. There was a feeling in the *Times* newsroom that the Chicago *Tribune* was envious, a view that was reinforced after James Warren, the *Tribune's* deputy managing editor, commented to *Crain's Chicago Business,* "What'd they win for? Editorials. Well, I'd say we have a better editorial page, by and large. They won for photography. I think ours is as good as anybody. . . . Front to back, I'd argue that our features still remain stronger day-to-day. . . . And no paper has done better [long-term reporting] projects in recent years than the *Tribune.* That's a fact."

Two months later, Carroll was informed that revenues at the *Times* were stagnant and that the Tribune Company expected him to make large newsroom cuts. According to the newspaper analyst John Morton, Tribune's other newspapers, before the purchase of Times Mirror, consistently produced profit margins averaging close to thirty per cent, while the Los Angeles *Times* was earning considerably less. Margins at the *Times* had increased, but, despite the changes that Carroll and Baquet had made, daily circulation had fallen by 12.8 per cent since 2000, to just under a million. Nevertheless, Carroll resisted the demand; he continued to believe that the strategy he and Baquet were following would eventually result in larger profits, and that the cuts could permanently damage the paper. Carroll called FitzSimons and proposed that he and Baquet fly to Chicago over the weekend to discuss the cuts. Instead, that afternoon FitzSimons and Fuller took the corporate jet to the Burbank airport, where they met with Carroll and Baquet for more than two hours. The discussion was civil and frank, but FitzSimons kept repeating that revenues were not growing, and Carroll and Baquet realized that they had lost the argument. In the end, they were asked to cut sixty-seven out of about eleven hundred editorial positions. In the prior four years, annual expenses had been reduced by about a hundred and thirty million dollars; further cuts were requested for the 2005 budget. "I don't think Carroll's relationship with the Tribune Company ever recovered," Tim Rutten told me.

A senior editor has described the conflict between Chicago and the *Times* editors as "a wrestling match," attributing it in large part to the fact that executives in Chicago were "a little bit panicked" at the company's relatively low stock price and at weaker circulation and advertising numbers. The paper was constantly being urged to adopt the latest "management fad," this editor said, including schemes to lure young readers with a free youth paper "that people would read on trains—and there are no trains in L.A.!" The "ongoing question" in the newsroom, one reporter said, was "What's Chicago doing to us now?"

"Hey, I know—why don't we go on a little crime spree?"

Journalists may try to understand the world, but not all of them grasp the business side of their newspapers. On the twenty-third floor of Tribune Tower, on Michigan Avenue, in Chicago, Tribune Company executives tend to view journalism through the prism of the company's successful publishing business, which in 2004 provided seventy-two per cent of Tribune's $5.7 billion in revenues. "We think everybody in the organization should understand what's happening in the wider world of media," FitzSimons, the C.E.O., told me recently. "Because if we don't make that attempt, if we aren't relentless about it, how can we expect decisions to be understood? People at the papers need to understand how the business is changing."

Measured by revenue, the Tribune Company is the second-biggest newspaper chain, after Gannett, which in 2004 had $6.6 billion in revenues, from a hundred and one newspapers, including *USA Today.* Knight Ridder, with thirty-one dailies, including the Philadelphia *Inquirer* and the San Jose *Mercury News,* earned about three billion dollars. Measured by daily circulation, the Tribune Company ranks third, with about 3.1 million, behind Gannett, with 7.6 million, and Knight Ridder, with 3.8 million. For 2004, according to Morton, Gannett newspapers' operating profit margin was twenty-eight per cent, and Knight Ridder's was nineteen per cent. Operating margins at the Tribune newspapers were down to eighteen per cent.

In recent years, Tribune Company executives have met their earnings goals by relying on "efficiencies"—the euphemism for outsourcing, cuts, and layoffs—and these reductions have impressed Wall Street analysts and annual shareholders' meetings. In a recent report, the Goldman Sachs analyst Peter P. Appert noted that Tribune operating expenses had dropped, even though the costs of newsprint and of employee benefits rose. "A 5% staff reduction implemented over the past several quarters was key to this performance," he wrote. "We are particularly impressed with the company's ability to hold newspaper op-

OXYGEN

Everything needs it: bone, muscles, and even,
while it calls the earth its home, the soul.
So the merciful, noisy machine

stands in our house working away in its
lung-like voice. I hear it as I kneel
before the fire, stirring with a

stick of iron, letting the logs
lie more loosely. You, in the upstairs room,
are in your usual position, leaning on your

right shoulder which aches
all day. You are breathing
patiently; it is a

beautiful sound. It is
your life, which is so close
to my own that I would not know

where to drop the knife of
separation. And what does this have to do
with love, except

everything? Now the fire rises
and offers a dozen, singing, deep-red
roses of flame. Then it settles

to quietude, or maybe gratitude, as it feeds
as we all do, as we must, upon the invisible gift:
our purest, sweet necessity: the air.

—*Mary Oliver*

erating margins essentially flat." Despite the Tribune Company's efforts, its stock price fell eighteen per cent in 2004. (Last week, after a court ruled that the Tribune Company was liable for a billion dollars in tax costs, the stock fell more than four per cent. The case, which the company is appealing, predates the acquisition of Times Mirror.)

Jack Fuller believed that, while Carroll was doing a "brilliant" editorial job in Los Angeles, he wasn't enough of a "team player." Fuller, who had been a rival of FitzSimons for the C.E.O. job, stepped down in December, 2004, in order to return to writing. He was replaced by his deputy, Scott Smith, who is fifty-four. Unlike Fuller, Smith has never been a journalist. He is a Chicago native and has spent most of his career at the Tribune Company. A business-school graduate, he joined the company twenty-five years ago as a financial executive, and rose to become the chief financial officer and then chief corporate strategist. In 1993, he was appointed president and publisher of the South Florida *Sun-Sentinel*, in Fort Lauderdale, and in 1997 he returned to Chicago as president and publisher of the Chicago Tribune Company.

In Los Angeles, Smith is sometimes described as "an empty suit"—a frequent term in newsrooms for a paper's corporate overseers. Leo Wolinsky recalls a meeting soon after he was appointed: "We were talking about good things we were doing and how we were trying to hire the best people. He said, 'I don't think you always have to hire the best people.' I was so stunned I didn't follow up. I may be wrong, but I worried that it meant he did not necessarily mean to hire the best. He wanted us to hire the cheapest." Smith denies saying this. Carroll was there, and although he does not remember Smith's words, he recalls that "several things he said caused concern." He also says, referring to Smith, "Every time I mentioned the idea that the Los Angeles *Times* should be among the four best papers, I had the feeling it made people uncomfortable. Nobody ever said we shouldn't do it. But nobody ever said, Yes, that's a good idea."

Smith is viewed more enthusiastically by Ann Marie Lipinski, who joined the Chicago *Tribune* as an intern in 1978, right after college, and whom he appointed editor in 2001. Lipinski acknowledges the "ongoing conversation" at all newspapers about "how you balance the social mission with the economics," but she says that Smith "talks a lot about the social mission of the paper, and it's music to my ears. I don't know that every editor is as fortunate to have somebody minding the store who actually understands the value of that as deeply as he does." When Lipinski's words were repeated to Smith, he smiled and said the sort of thing that journalists like to hear people say about them. At the *Tribune*, he said, he "learned how a journalist thinks about serving readers every day, great storytelling, and what really matters in terms of our public role as well as our commercial role."

Smith was focussed on the diminished circulation of the Tribune papers, in particular the L.A. *Times* and, most worryingly, *Newsday*, where there had been a circulation scandal. Executives presumably intent on meeting the Tribune Company's profit goals had lied about the numbers, inflating advertising rates. This forced the company to set aside ninety million dollars from 2004 earnings to settle claims from advertisers who had overpaid for phantom readers.

Recently, I met with Smith and FitzSimons in a conference room between their offices. FitzSimons, a native New Yorker, started out at Grey Advertising and then became a sales-and-marketing executive for Viacom. He joined the Tribune Company in 1982, in television sales, and rose to run all of broadcasting for the company. He be-

HOTEL
To CONSERVE ENERGY Our Staff Will Not Respond -The Mgt
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came C.E.O. in 2003 and chairman the following year.

Smith dismissed criticism that the Tribune Company had an unseemly obsession with profits. "We don't think about margins alone," he insisted. "We think about 'Are we growing?' " FitzSimons interrupted to say, "We look at improvements in efficiency. Ideally, you want margins to grow through revenue growth, but we have not had revenue growth at the L.A. *Times*." He went on, "Seventy per cent of our employees are shareholders. Our employees own eleven per cent of the company"—and, he suggested, keep their eyes fixed on the stock price. When Tribune bought Times Mirror, in 2000, FitzSimons thought that his company would be cheered as a rescuer. He is still shocked that the *Times* newsroom treats him and the other Tribune executives with such hostility: "Five years later, we have the same questions being asked."

In the first six months of 2005, revenues for the Tribune Company were down two per cent from the previous year. The *Times* all but froze hiring; the single slot in the paper's Las Vegas bureau has been empty for more than a year. The Tribune Company commissioned a study of staffing patterns at various papers and, according to senior editors, discovered that the *Times* had many more copy editors than the *Tribune*. Carroll told Smith that copy editors were an important part of making a good paper great, but Smith replied that the *Tribune* was sufficiently great with a much smaller staff. Carroll did not tell him what he believed—that the *Tribune* was inferior to the *Times*.

I showed Smith and FitzSimons a clipping in which Carroll was quoted as saying that newspapers set their profit goals too high and that Wall Street was too influential. "That's his opinion!" FitzSimons said sharply. "We're looking toward the future and what do we have to do and how do we need to allocate our resources to keep our business healthy, and have the financial wherewithal to continue to do great journalism. Unfortunately, the caricature that develops is frequently 'the greedy corporate suits versus quality journalism.' " Later, I asked Smith how he responds to reporters who ask why a fifteen-per-cent profit margin is not enough. He replied, "It's the equivalent of saying, 'I wrote a really good story yesterday, but that's the best I'll ever do.' Our premise is that we can improve." The question is: Improve the paper or the profits?

Not everyone in the *Times* newsroom believed that the first round of cuts damaged the paper. Doug Franz, who followed Baquet to Los Angeles, said, "I know the Tribune Company pretty well, since I worked at the Chicago *Tribune* for eight years, and it's not Knight Ridder or Gannett." Even Carroll says of last year's cuts, "We tried to mask it. We were reasonably successful." For instance, when Carroll cut the staff of the Orange County edition, he was able to use some of the savings to expand the paper elsewhere.

FitzSimons said that journalists make "too many fake arguments" about how newspaper companies are trying "to dumb down," rather than asking how newspapers can attract new readers. "What's the right balance of entertainment and hard news?" he said. "Publishing a paper that just *we* like maybe isn't enough in this environment. We have to be more open to what consumers want." He showed me a review of several journalism books by Richard A. Posner, a Chicago federal judge, in the New York *Times Book Review*. "This is the point that I felt was interesting," FitzSimons said, pointing to some sentences that he had highlighted: "Journalists express dismay that bottom-line pressures are reducing the quality of news coverage. What this actually means is that when competition is intense, providers of a service are forced to give the consumer what he or she wants, not what they, as proud professionals, think the consumer should want, or, more bluntly, what they want." In a letter to the editor of his own *Book Review*, the paper's executive editor, Bill Keller, asked, "Would he be so cynical about a world he actually knows?" In Tribune Tower, Posner's argument trumped Keller's. Clearly, the news side saw itself at war with people who had minimal interest in ambitious journalism, and the "suits" saw themselves in conflict with sanctimonious and unrealistic idealists.

The Tribune Company's increasing impatience with the Los Angeles *Times* was made clear in March, when the paper's publisher, John Puerner, who had worked for the Tribune Company most of his professional life, announced that he was taking "a self-imposed career break" and would step down. Puerner, who is in his early fifties, was concerned about his wife, who had had a recent health scare, but in Chicago Puerner, who had become close to Carroll, was seen as having "gone native." "I never worked for a better publisher," Carroll said. Asked why Puerner left, Smith looked over at his publicity chief and then said, "John and I came to the conclusion together that he was ready for the next chapter in his life, and the *Times* was ready for the next publisher." When it was announced that Puerner was leaving, Carroll gave him a farewell party at his home. "If John had been there, I likely would have stayed a little longer," Carroll told me. To replace Puerner, Scott Smith appointed Jeffrey Johnson, a Chicagoan who had joined the Tribune Company in 1984, and who had worked for Puerner at the Orlando *Sentinel* and at the *Times.*

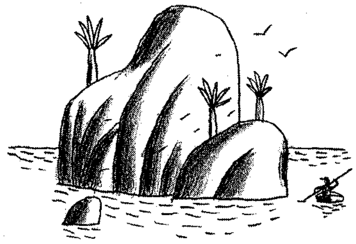
When I asked Carroll to interpret Dennis FitzSimons's argument that newsrooms need "to understand how the business is changing," he said, "I would interpret it as 'We don't understand his problems.' I think actually I do. He is in a position where he has got to hit profit targets regardless of revenues. If the company doesn't do that, there will be consequences from Wall Street and from the board." Carroll does not believe that the battles with Chicago were about miscommunication. "On the surface, it's about cuts. But it's also about aspirations for the paper, and for journalism itself. I think this paper is important beyond Southern California. Among other things, it is test case No. 1 of whether a newspaper chain can produce a first-rate newspaper." Carroll added, "It may be that it is simply structurally impossible."

Tension between L.A. and Chicago reached its peak this past spring, when the Tribune Company told Carroll that it wanted still more staff reductions. "It was becoming an annual thing," Carroll told me. (Over his four years as editor, the newsroom had been reduced, through layoffs, attrition, and buyouts, by nearly two hundred employees.) Some editors feared that the next round of cuts would be as much as ten per cent of the newsroom—about ninety people—although Carroll says that the figure was lower. FitzSimons said, "We don't comment on rumors." The proposed cuts, a senior editor explained, were based on a formula that pegged the newsroom budget to a fixed percentage of revenue; if revenue rose, the cuts went down. In addition, Scott Smith was pressing the *Times* to consolidate its overseas bureaus with those of other Tribune papers.

In late June, rumors circulated that both Carroll and Baquet were going to resign. By then, Carroll had told Baquet and Johnson that he was exhausted by what he saw as the Tribune Company's unquenchable desire to measure success by the accountant's ledger. Baquet was inclined to leave with Carroll, but Carroll urged him to consider his obligations to the people they both had hired.

On June 30th, Baquet and Johnson met with FitzSimons and Smith in Chicago. By then, the four men knew that Carroll was definitely leaving. "We talked for several hours about the paper," Baquet said. "We debated the size of the paper. We debated why there was a drop in circulation. We talked about what I thought was important. It was the kind of communication you're supposed to have." According to Smith, the discussion was "to make sure that we were in agreement on the important tasks ahead." They were not. FitzSimons and Smith discussed meeting financial targets; Baquet spoke about a newspaper's obligation to cover certain stories no matter what the cost. The discussion ended inconclusively.

When Baquet returned to Los Angeles, he told close associates, "I'm probably going to leave." Over the July 4th weekend, as this possibility seemed more likely, senior editors were called into the office. Johnson told his superiors in Chicago that it would be disastrous for the *Times* if both Baquet and Carroll quit. There were conference calls with Smith; Johnson pleaded with Baquet to stay, assuring him of the Tribune Company's flexibility. "I like Jeff a lot," Baquet said. He trusted Johnson more when he saw how intent the publisher was on keeping him.



The publisher was not eager, however, to keep Michael Kinsley, whose tenure had been controversial from the start. Kinsley had tried to combine ideas from the online world—he was the founding editor of *Slate*—with the voice of a newspaper, including an experiment to produce "wikitorials," allowing readers to rewrite *Times* editorials online. (The experiment was halted when, instead of posting thoughts, some readers posted pornography.) Soon after Johnson took over, he decided that Kinsley should report to the publisher, not the editor—the arrangement at most newspapers. Kinsley wanted to restructure his agreement so that he could spend even more time in Seattle. "Michael was not used to dealing with someone like Jeff, who is not starry-eyed when dealing with Michael Kinsley, as most of us were," a friend of Kinsley's told me. "Michael was offended by what he took to be indifference." There was growing strain between the two men, which was personal, and separate from the institutional battle between the newsroom and Chicago.

In mid-September, Johnson decided to sever the *Times'* relationship with Kinsley; he didn't say whether the paper would continue to run the weekly column Kinsley had been writing. "I concluded that it was best to make a clean break," Johnson told me. In the end, Kinsley upstaged Johnson, further infuriating him. He announced that he had been fired and would be an adviser to the Washington *Post,* which would be home to his column, though he hoped that the Los Angeles paper would also carry it. Kinsley's friend and protégé Andrés Martinez, who now has full charge of the editorial page, found all of it painful. When asked whether he would run Kinsley's column, he replied, "It hasn't been decided." Kinsley said, "Your dream editorial-page editor should be part of the community. I thought maybe I'd be a brain asset."

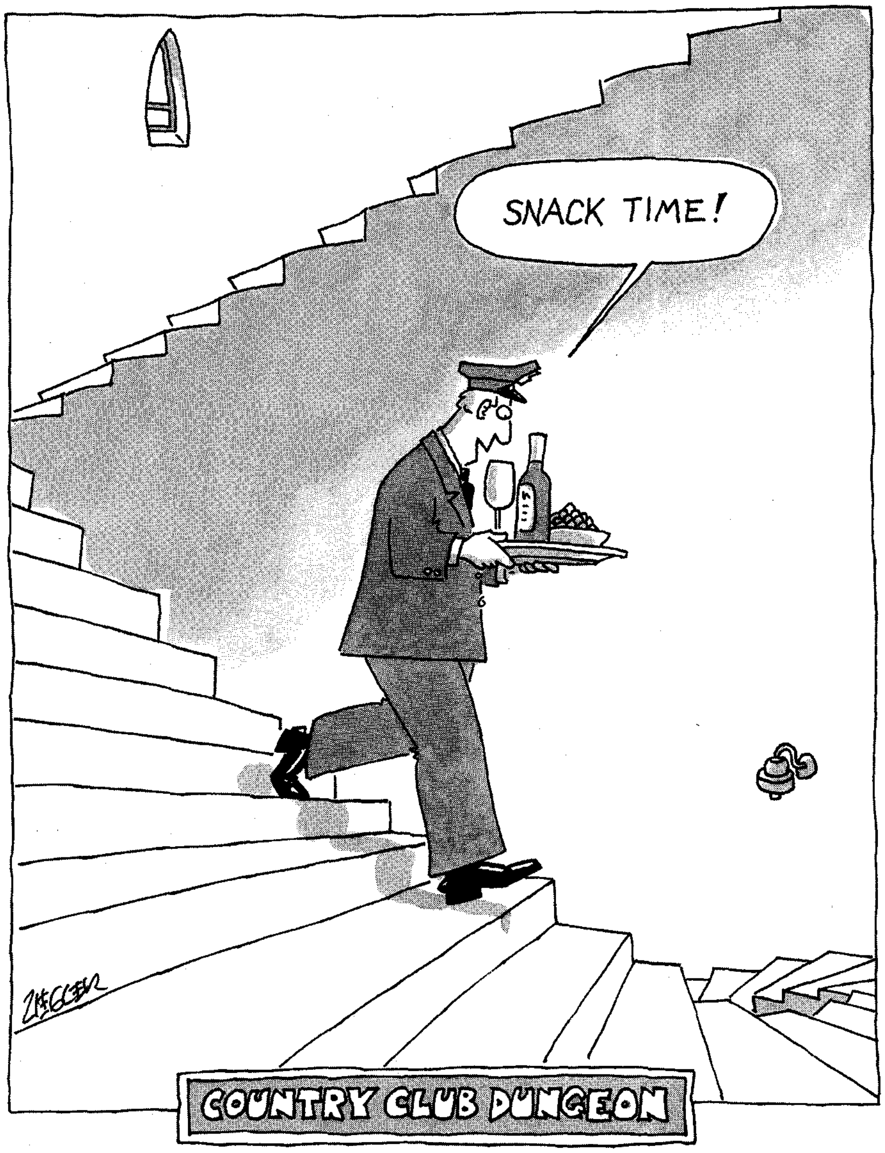
The drama in Los Angeles revealed many of the dilemmas facing the modern newspaper business. The Carnegie Corporation recently reported that the average age of newspaper readers is fifty-three. Baby boomers, it said, "read newspapers one-third less than their parents and the Gen Xers read newspapers another one-third less than the Boomers." A third of Americans under the age of forty say that the Internet is now their main source for news, a Pew survey reported in June. In a speech at the annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors last April, Rupert Murdoch gave something of a warning to his audience. Younger readers, Murdoch said, "want control over their media, instead of being controlled by it." Murdoch went on, "Too often, the question we ask is: 'Do we have the story?' Rather than 'Does anyone want the story?' "

Newspaper companies have responded in a variety of ways. In 2000, to protect its classified ads, which account for about a third of advertising revenues—and have been lost to Craigslist and other online sources—the Tribune Company, in partnership with Knight Ridder and, later, Gannett, purchased CareerBuilder.com, which compiles the classifieds of multiple newspapers online. Tribune maintains ownership in a number of other Web sites, including Cars.com and Apartments.com. Newspapers everywhere have invested in free online editions, and the L.A. *Times* site attracts 4.6 million unique visitors every month. (The Washington *Post's* site claims 10.4 million visitors, and the New York *Times* claims 12.5 million.) By the spring of 2004, the Newspaper Association of America reported, fifteen hundred dailies had Web sites. Newspapers have experimented by charging for some things—access to archives and columnists, for instance—and most collect information about their readers, which might be of value to advertisers. But so far the only newspaper to make a significant profit from online paid subscribers is the *Wall Street Journal.* FitzSimons does not envision a shift from print "in our lifetime," although media companies seem almost desperate to claim a piece of Internet real estate. This past summer, Murdoch's News Corporation spent $1.3 billion to buy several sites, including MySpace.com, a social networking site. Other newspaper companies have paid handsomely to compete.

Irwin Gotlieb is the C.E.O. of GroupM, which each year manages some fifty billion dollars' worth of advertising—more than any other company in the world. These days, few of those dollars go to newspapers. But Gotlieb thinks that money might eventually go to digital newspapers, presumably because the technology will give advertisers a way to target individual consumers.

So far, though, nothing has stopped the steady acquisition of media properties, including the Tribune Company's purchase of Times Mirror. Lauren Rich Fine, a Merrill Lynch publishing analyst, points out that newspapers' profits went from fourteen per cent of their revenue to twenty-three per cent between 1991 and 2004. Yet most newspaper stocks have not done well, because of a fear that, in the face of new technologies and changing audiences, decline is inevitable.

That sort of pessimism has led the biggest chains, Tribune Company, Knight Ridder, and Gannett, to aggressively cut costs. The McClatchy Company, however, which owns twelve dailies in affluent communities, including the Sacramento *Bee* and the Minneapolis *Star Tribune,* believes that the way to add readers is to add staff to newsrooms. Much the same tack has been taken in recent years by the twenty-six Newhouse newspapers, which include the Newark *Star-Ledger* and the New Or-



leans *Times-Picayune*. (*The New Yorker* is a Newhouse publication.) According to McClatchy's chairman and C.E.O., Gary B. Pruitt, its newspapers have registered "twenty consecutive years of daily circulation growth." Pruitt expects that record to end this year.

To reach nonregular newspaper readers, *Newsday* in 1998 started publishing a free Spanish-language newspaper, *Hoy;* the Tribune Company introduced *Hoy* in Chicago in 2003 and in Los Angeles the following year. There are many free newspapers published, from alternative weeklies like the *Village Voice* to newer additions like the San Francisco and Washington *Examiners*, owned by the Denver entrepreneur Philip Anschutz, who has trademarked the name for more than sixty cities. In October, 2002, the Chicago *Tribune* launched *RedEye*, a free paper targeted at eighteen-to-thirty-four-year-olds, with a print run of a hundred thousand copies. Ann Marie Lipinski, to whom *RedEye's* editors and its staff of twenty-two report, refers to the paper as "a really exciting laboratory" to learn what young people want in a newspaper. *RedEye* appears in a minimalist tabloid format, which saves paper costs and is easier to read on the subway. It does not attempt to meet the journalistic standards of the *Tribune*. Joe Knowles, the co-editor of *RedEye*, told me, "I think our readers will grow into *Tribune* readers."

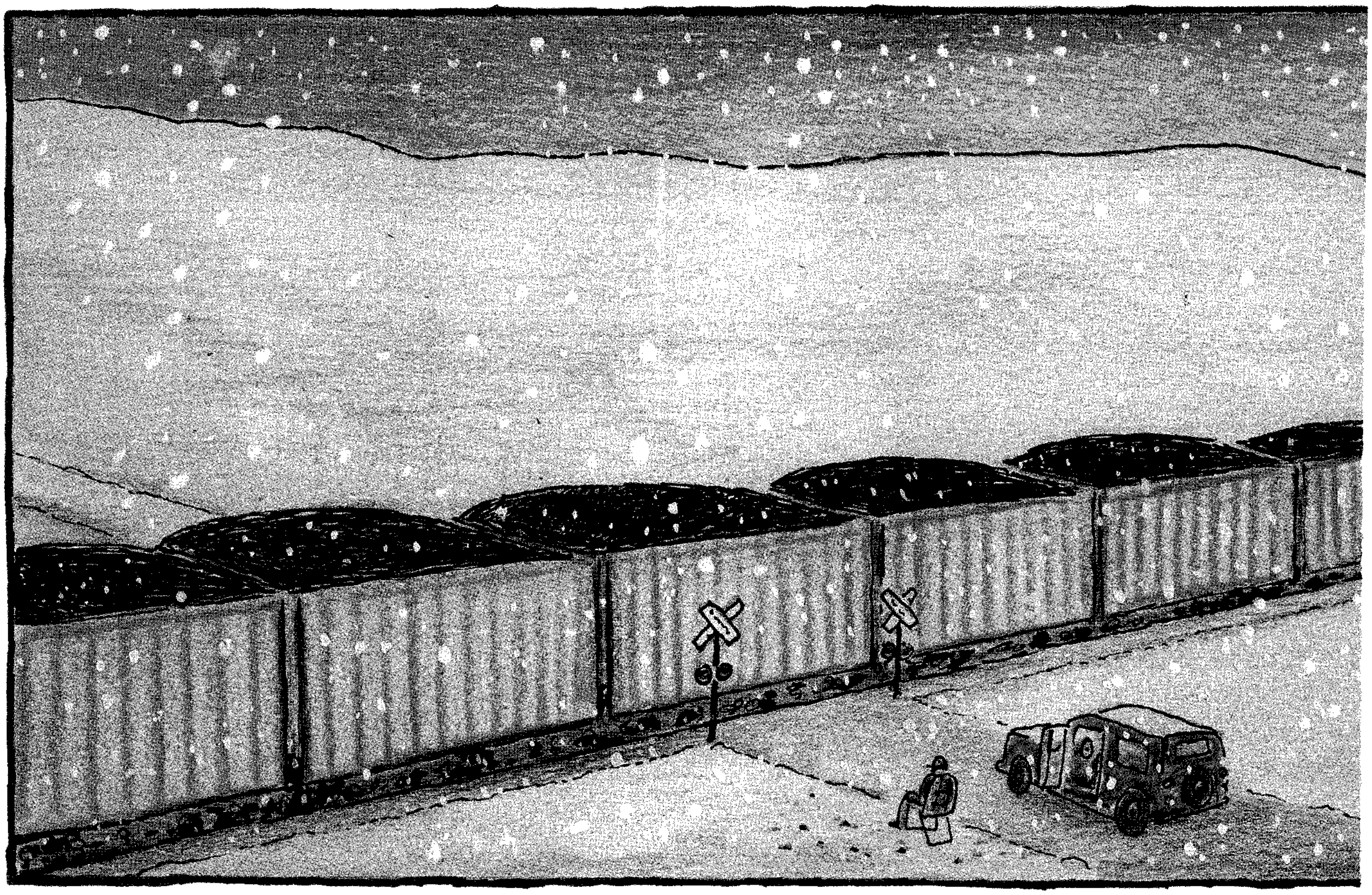
After the June 30th meeting in Chicago, Smith tried to be accommodating to Baquet—at the margins. He told him that newsroom cuts would be necessary, but that Tribune wouldn't order reductions in overseas bureaus this year. He would let Baquet lead a committee, much as he had done with the Washington bureaus, to analyze how Tribune national and international bureaus could operate more efficiently. Baquet, in turn, agreed that he would not reflexively oppose more stories from other Tribune papers or more survey research of readers. And, most important, he agreed to stay.

"What I got from him," Martin Gottlieb recalled, was that after the "horse trading" Baquet "was satisfied emotionally." Baquet convinced himself that he and Carroll bore some blame for the fractious relationship with Chicago. "John and I made a mistake," Baquet told friends. "We didn't work that relationship better." Yet Baquet knew that he had reached a ceasefire, not a peace treaty: "I think newspapers run the risk of cutting themselves to death. At some point, we're going to have to stop." Joel Suppell, the deputy business editor, wondered if Baquet was "the last finger in the dike."

Baquet got a chance to place his own signature on the Los Angeles *Times* when Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. The paper sent about fifteen reporters to the area. By the third day, four of the six front-page stories, including an extraordinary color photograph of New Orleans underwater, described the storm's toll, as did eleven pages in the main section. Jeff Johnson, Baquet said, "never questioned" the extra expense.

To try to improve communication between Chicago and Los Angeles, FitzSimons and Smith went to Los Angeles in August for a meeting with Baquet and Johnson and the senior editorial and business managers at the paper. Such meetings are fairly common at large companies, and allow for both a presentation and questions. Scott Smith was asked about something he had been quoted as saying in the Chicago *Sun-Times* a few days earlier—that he would like to see the editorial product of the Los Angeles *Times* "tweaked." The deputy managing editor, John Montorio, asked, "What do you mean by 'tweaked'?" Smith assured him that Chicago would never dictate content to one of its papers, but he added that Los Angeles was a vast, complex market, and he wanted the newsroom to be always mindful of who its readers were and what they expected from a newspaper.

Several hours later, Baquet talked to me about the future. He said that five years ago, when he and Carroll arrived, the paper had "lost a whole generation of talent—maybe thirty people in all," to other publications. He acknowledged that they had cut back too much on local news; of the Orange County office, he said, "It was way too big before and now it is too small." He said that he did not know whether the Los Angeles *Times* would someday publish a free paper like *RedEye*, though he believes that the *Times* needs to reach new readers, including young ones. And he does not, he said, share the populist vision of editors giving readers whatever they demand. "It's not always our job to give readers what they want," Baquet told me. "What if they don't want war coverage or foreign coverage or to see poverty in their communities? Southern newspapers are still hanging their heads because generations ago they gave readers what they wanted—no coverage of segregation and the civil-rights movement." The job of newspapers, Baquet added, was to help readers understand the world. "If we don't do that, who will?" ♦



GLEN BAXTER

A REPORTER AT LARGE

COAL TRAIN—II

Going into Thunder.

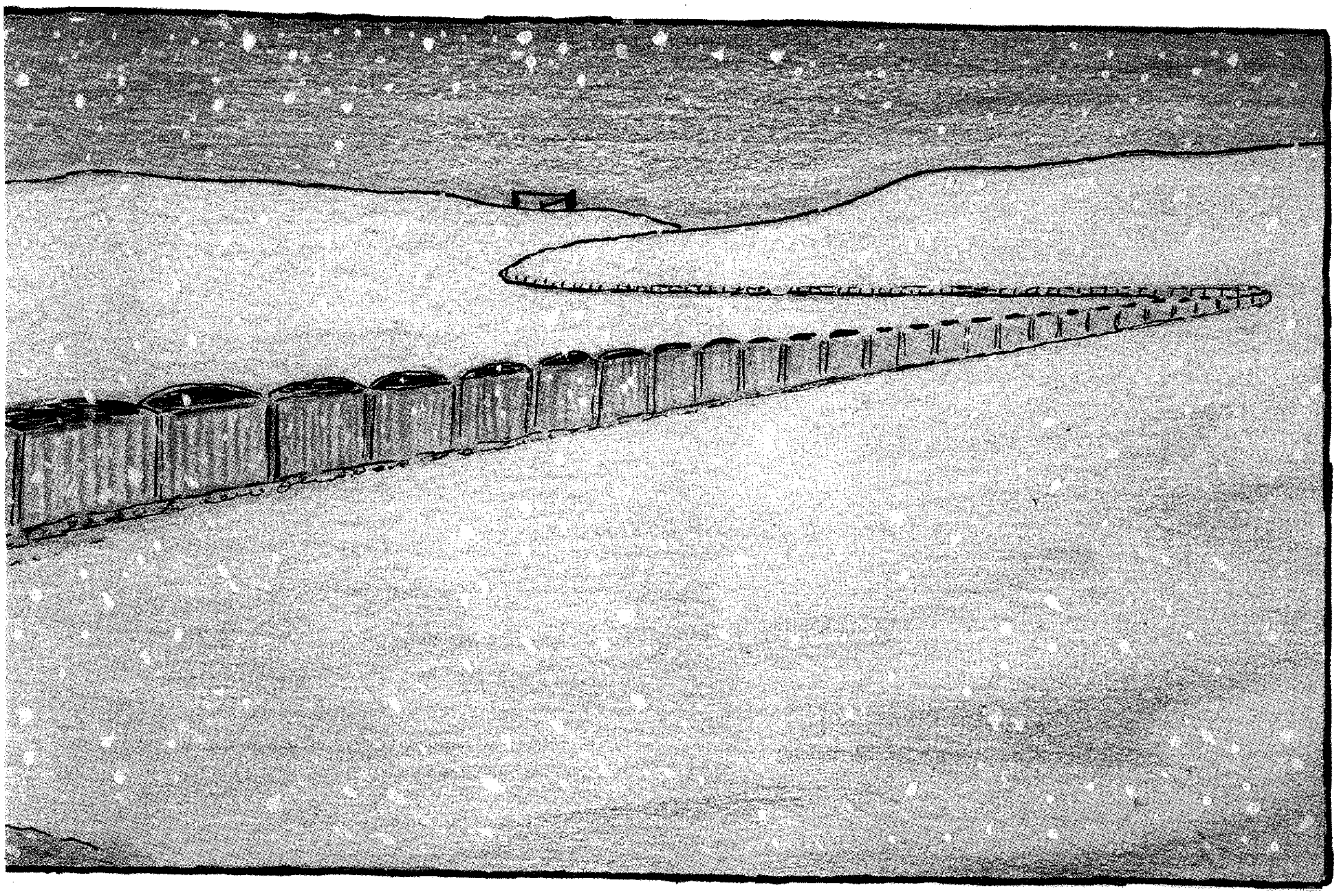
BY JOHN McPHEE

(*An armadillo is a van sent out on highways to replace train crews whose regulated hours of service have run out. Dick Eisfeller makes and sells Warholian movies of freight trains. Scott Davis is an engineer, Paul Fitzpatrick a conductor. Their routine "turn" is between North Platte, Nebraska, and Marysville, Kansas, on the Union Pacific Railroad. A manifest train has varied types of cars and cargoes. An intermodal train carries containers, often double-stacked. "Consist" is a railroad term for what a train is carrying. Bailey Yard, in North Platte, is the largest railroad yard in the world. On a January morning, Davis and Fitzpatrick are about to leave Bailey Yard in CNAMR, a nineteen-thousand-ton coal train, on its way east from the Powder River Basin of Wyoming, locus of the largest coal mines on earth.*)

Over the hundred and eight miles between Bailey Yard and Gibbon Junction, Nebraska, more than two hundred miles of freight trains are in motion every day. While the advent of the Powder River coal trains has doubled the volume, it has more or less quadrupled the viscosity. The hot intermodals, the high-priority perishable services—the shooters—are not what they used to be. Commonly, they average eighteen miles an hour on the Triple-Track Main.

We met coal trains, Q trains ("westbound hot shots"), coal trains, autotrains, rock trains, grain trains, coal trains, Z trains, manifest trains. A sixty-six-hundred-foot stack train coming almost straight at you seems like a city about to collapse. At least a third of the trains were empty, not only the westbound coal trains returning to the Powder River Basin but autotrains, rock trains, grain trains, and ballast trains—all going back to somewhere for more. We went by twenty miles of motionless trains, waiting to get into North Platte, queued up on a plain so open and vast that we went over farm grade crossings that had no lights or gates, just the big wooden X of Stop Look & Listen. We passed lone grain elevators that resembled the United Nations building and were so large that they had their own switch engines.

From North Platte to Gibbon Junction, we descended seven hundred and forty feet, an average grade of .113 per cent—a slope much too subtle to be seen by the human eye. The descent continued at the same average rate all the way



to Marysville, which is fifteen hundred and ninety-nine feet lower than North Platte. The significant grades along the way—Hayland Hill, Hastings Hill, the divide between the Big Blue and Little Blue—reminded me of fish in a river. I couldn't see them. Scott could. I would not have known they were there had Scott not made remarks from time to time about "coming up into these hills" or "pulling a pretty good grade." I could feel grades, surely—feel the uphill deceleration of nineteen thousand tons, feel the release when they were over a summit and rolling free—but even on the named hills the track looked, to me, essentially level. If you ride a bicycle, you know when you are going uphill, even where the gradient is so slight that your eye doesn't pick it up. In a nineteen-thousand-ton train, your physical perception of grade is much the same as it would be if you were on a twenty-pound bicycle—especially if your name is Scott Davis.

Run a coal train out of the Powder River Basin and down to Kansas and Arkansas and across the South into Georgia. The steepest grade you encounter is 1.5 per cent, on track that to the eye seems close to level. You can discern that it is going up or down, but it will not remind you of Crested Butte. It will seem less steep than the East Pacific Rise. Yet a loaded coal train running wide open in Notch 8 can attack a 1.5-per-cent grade and soon be beaten down under ten miles an hour. The steepest mainline railroad grade in the United States is Saluda Hill, coming off the Blue Ridge of North Carolina at five per cent—a thousand vertical feet in four miles. It is not presently used. To get up it, trains were cut into thirds. To get down it, Dick Eisfeller says, "they were extremely careful, put it that way." The base of the hill is called Slaughter Pen Cut. In the Hudson Highlands, of New York, the Mt. Beacon Incline Railway, also out of service now, went up a grade of sixty-five per cent, lifting passengers fifteen hundred feet to views of the Hudson River. I rode up the Mt. Beacon Incline Railway once and was able to discern the angle. In a litany of comparative grades, Mt. Beacon doesn't really count. The locomotive was made by the Otis Elevator Company. The steepest surviving mainline grade is near four per cent—at Raton Pass, in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, between Colorado and New Mexico. Glorieta Pass, near Santa Fe, is 3.0. In California, the steepest grades in the Sierra Nevada reach 2.4—a grade that can be expressed as a one-mile ramp to the roof of a twelve-story building, nothing more. In the so-called Punch Bowl below Cajon Pass, in the San Bernardino Mountains—entrance to the Los Angeles Basin and once the route of the Super Chief—there are three tracks, with grades, respectively, of 2.2, 2.2, and 3.0. The routes of the heavy coal trains rarely include grades much over one per cent. The roadbeds may look flat, but the difference in steepness between 1.2 and 1.5 can be prohibitive.

Whatever the route, somewhere between origin and destination there is going to be a ruling grade—the one that is more challenging than any other. Trains are made up to meet ruling grades—barely. If you need thirteen

Each year, nearly thirteen hundred trainloads of Wyoming coal are required to feed one Georgia power plant.

hundred horsepower to get up your ruling grade, you'll be given three AC4400 locomotives. Many summits are marked by metallic yellow flags with black triangles on them. If something slips, or you lose an engine and you don't make it past a yellow flag, call an armadillo.

Direct-current diesel-electric locomotives are fine for hauling autotrains, intermodal containers, and sugar beets, but alternating current is the better way to move the weight of coal. A.C. traction motors—the result of a newer technology—can handle more current and pull more loaded coal cars. In the D.C. days of the twentieth century, railroads ran trains with as many as five locomotives. Now, with A.C. traction motors, trains of the same gross tonnage and on the same routes can be driven by three. A coal train is so heavy that it should be limited to a hundred cars if the locomotives are only on the front end, because with greater length and added tonnage the couplers between cars will start to break; the train literally tears itself apart. In the middle nineteen-nineties, slave locomotives under computer-coördinated radio control were added in the middle or at the rear of trains, to push in synchronization with the pull from the front, taking pressure off the couplers. That is when coal trains grew in length to a mile and a half. The pull-and-push method, integrally operated by the engineer, is known as distributed power. A few exceptional coal trains are two miles long.

When something linear is draped across a great deal of landscape, it will be required to go uphill and downhill simultaneously if it tries to move at all. It crosses a summit, and its front begins descending while the rest is still climbing. If it is a coal train and there is a restricted-speed zone down ahead, many thousands of tons will strain the dynamic brakes while many thousands of other tons still need a great deal of applied power. Between North Platte, Nebraska, and Marysville, Kansas, a scene exactly fitting that description was a two-mile eastbound rise that led to an overpass where Union Pacific crossed the Burlington Northern Santa Fe in Hastings, Nebraska. The restricted-speed zone was half a mile down the far side. Scott had to deal with the antithetical stresses of the "train action" by continuing to apply positive power and simultaneously introducing what manuals call "brake propagation." This was possible only with distributed power, and he had long since "thrown the fence," desynchronizing the locomotives at the two ends of the train. The computer screen in front of him that related to power was now split by a vertical bar between the data of the front locomotives and the data from the rear unit, which was still pushing while the lead units were down in the dynamic brakes.

This was a place where a train could "get knuckles" (break couplers), and U.P. trains, in fact, had got six knuckles on Hastings Hill since Christmas. This is Scott's description of what was happening now: "You have to be within one throttle notch up or down with head—for example, two dynamic on the head end would allow throttle 1, 2, or 3 on the DP. It is not against the rules to be in dynamic brake 8 on the DP and 2 on the head end, but common sense will tell you that there is a possibility of pulling your train in two. There's a twenty-five-mile-an-hour slow order at Kicks Road, which is only about half a mile from the top of this hill. In order to get a hundred-and-thirty-three-car loaded coal train—nineteen thousand tons, DPU—over the hill without breaking in two, what you need to do is you need to have the rear DP unit shoving in about Notch 1, and you need to control the slack with the lead two DPs in dynamic, and you'll have to hold that train back at fifty-mile-an-hour until you reach the bottom, and then you need to be shoving with the DP in the eighth run to push the slack against the head end in order to come over that hill at twenty-five-mile-an-hour and keep the slack bunched in so it doesn't break in two."

It didn't.

By 7 P.M., with our headlight drilling darkness, CNAMR was going fast enough to explode a rooster, feathers everywhere, like a shower of sparks. A "rooster" in this context was a cock pheasant, which flew nose-to-nose into a thirty-eight-million-pound coal train. Minutes later, on the microwave radio, we heard a westbound train report to the dispatcher that the train in front of us, an eastbound manifest, was throwing real sparks from its twenty-seventh car from the rear. Signals flashed yellow. The train in front of us was ten miles down the track, and to Paul and Scott its situation brought a single thought: If we get stuck behind this manifest, our time will run out and our own train will die. Scott began moving the throttle down through the notches and into the dynamics. Within twenty-five hundred yards, he had brought CNAMR to a complete stop. If he had crept along, drifting, as he could have under the flashing yellow signals, he might have crept into a block so close to the stricken train that the dispatcher would not be able to get him around it. So Scott was preserving distance. The dispatcher was in Omaha—a hundred and twelve miles away, measured with a string—but he was in charge of all signals, all switches, and all movement of trains in many tens of miles before and behind us.

The signal structures over the tracks loomed black and nearly invisible now, but their lights had taken on a planetary brilliance—green, flashing yellow, yellow, red, and lunar (the high white that tells you you can creep past red). These same colors, stretched into long horizontal lines, were lighting up a wall in Omaha as if it were the wall of a disco. Trains in Arizona, California, Missouri, and Colorado were also running in patterns expressed on this wall, and on the wall opposite—the two sides of a narrow, tunnel-like room three hundred feet long. Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah—in all, about nineteen thousand miles of the Union Pacific were under control from within these walls, in the space known to the company as the Harriman Dispatching Center and to the people who work there as "the bunker."

It looks like one—theatrically dark, below grade, the caverned core of a two-story building, and reinforced with such redundant masonry that it is rated to withstand "the force of a telephone pole hitting it at a hundred and eighty miles per hour," an assertion that in this part of the country is not immune from testing. The bunker calls to mind Mission Control in Houston, but even louder is the echo of those old films about the Strategic Air Command zapping the hell out of the Soviet Union from a deeply inhumed command center in Omaha. Four hundred dispatchers work at Harriman, about sixty at any given time. They wear ball caps that say things like "Dad to the Bone." Fingers on key-boards, feet on radio pedals, earphones under the caps, they sit at consoles in partitioned cubicles looking down into as many as eight computer screens and up at the colored lines—the sometimes flashing bands—on the walls. The lines are tracks, and some of the colors are rolling trains. If a paid inmate or a college student were to be brought here to undergo clinical psychological testing, he'd be babbling in the street in thirty minutes. Dispatchers have left Harriman to go into air-traffic control, imagining a simpler life. In the words of John Reininger, a supervisor in the bunker, "Air-traffic controllers have the great luxury of another dimension. Air-traffic controllers find this more complicated. We'd *like* to have a train change its altitude to get over another train—it won't work."

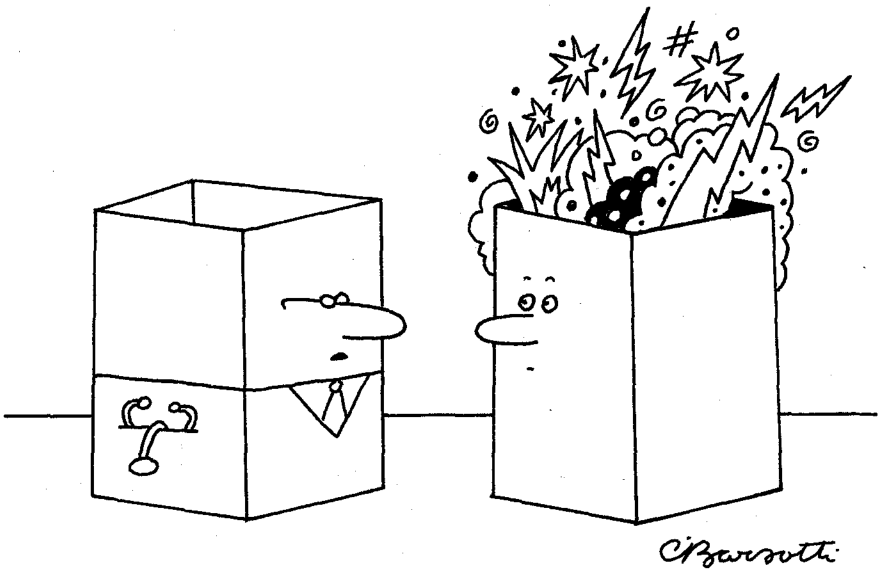
A raised axial platform, supervisory in nature, is flanked on either side by a hundred yards of dispatchers, sitting in their cubicles, about five feet lower. Each is separated by clear partitions from neighbors left and right, whose territories are adjacent and average three hundred miles. Crew-change points will often coincide with the edges of dispatchers' territories. In rear projection, the polychromatic representation of the railroad on the wall directly ahead of each dispatcher depicts what is going on in the dispatcher's territory, and a glance to the left or the right shows the traffic that is approaching. If something is flashing, it needs attention; and something is generally a train, for which the dispatcher is clearing the way. In Reininger's words, "He owns the track, so to speak."

The multiple lines of color representing trains and tracks are not everywhere parallel. Where tracks converge, as at Gibbon Junction, the lines assume swastika patterns and the wall resembles a Navajo blanket. Where a stretch of track is occupied by a train, it is lighted bright red. Where a stretch of track has nothing on it and will not have for a while, it is white. A computer is thinking about it. Green track is clear for imminent use. Brown is for manual mode, computer uninvited. A computer has planned a train's experiences two or three hours ahead of the train. The dispatcher watches the plan as it unfolds, and overrides it if necessary, whereupon the relevant stretch of track on the wall turns brown. Malfunctioning switches appear as vertical blue rectangles, like small postage stamps. Specific symbols represent specific trains. Small arrows show plotted directions. Small "H"s represent switch heaters. Such is the detail that on the axial platform a supervisor lifts a pair of binoculars to look over a dispatcher's shoulder and scan the rear-projection wall fifteen feet in front of her. Dispatchers at Harriman have spent entire careers on one stretch of track. If a coal train is making a very long trip from mine to plant, as many as a dozen dispatchers will see it through. Dispatchers have in their hands the safety not only of train crews but also of track workers, not to mention the surrounding public. After twelve weeks of classes, they are trained on the job for about three months. It takes them five years to become really efficient. Above each dispatcher's cubicle is a red strobe light set on a shaft like a torch. If a crisis develops in a dispatcher's territory, the red light begins to flash so that everyone in the general area will see it if the dispatcher is off peeing.

Some television directors look at fewer monitors than dispatchers do. Dispatchers' screens in the bunker can display data from trackside sensors and scanners. They chart winds and flash floods. Any emergency situation will cause a window describing it to pop up on a screen. As snow falls anywhere in Harriman's nineteen thousand miles, switch heaters are turned on from Harriman.

Under Centralized Traffic Control, you can run a train on any track in any direction. You can run three trains side by side all headed west on the Triple-Track Main. Where the trackage is wired for C.T.C., signals are all two-sided. I remember riding in a Metroliner in Maryland and standing in the front of the front car, where—through two windows—I could see the track ahead. Over the engineer's shoulder, I could see, lit up, a digital readout of the train's speed. The engineer was wearing a tie. There were four tracks. Gradually, the Metroliner had drifted to its left and now it was flying south at the left-hand extreme, on what is customarily a northbound track, at a hundred and eleven miles an hour. A pickup in front of us ran a gated crossing. We missed the pickup. On down the far-left track, we were soon looking directly into the headlight of a locomotive. We kept going. Somewhat shy of the headlight, the Metroliner slipped over to the next

"I get my best ideas in airports, peeking at other people's laptops."



"We have pills for some of that."

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track, and shot past the other train. Centralized Traffic Control.

Under C.T.C., the dispatcher at his console controls all movement, and can set all signals and throw all switches. The system involves microwave towers, satellites, and fibre optics (strung along the tracks like the nineteenth century's telegraph wires). Train orders and track warrants used to be presented on actual paper given to the crew. Where they needed to, they stopped the train, walked ahead, threw switches by hand, and made signals with their arms in varied configurations, like football referees. A fist to the forehead was trainspeak for headlight. If you cupped both hands over your breasts, you were talking about a tank car. As with hand-swung red lanterns, all that was replaced by the block-signal system, which remains in operation in a lot of terrain. Blocks average two miles. If something is stalled four blocks ahead of you, you go from green to flashing yellow to yellow to red. Under block signals, a fast train coming up behind a slow train has no alternative but to slow up and follow. Under C.T.C., a fast train can go around a slow train. Trackage still exists that has neither C.T.C. nor a block-signal system. The term for it is "dark territory." In dark territory, all instructions—even train orders—are verbal via microwave radio. Coal trains on the old Rock Island branch between Fairbury and Hallam, Nebraska, are in dark territory. They must receive a track warrant by radio from the bunker, and must give the track warrant back to the dispatcher when they leave dark territory. The town of Hallam not long ago was utterly destroyed by a tornado. All that was left was the power plant, at the dead end of dark territory.

In 1969, I went to Campbell County, Wyoming, with Floyd Elgin Dominy, who—decades earlier—had started his career there as a county agent advising ranchers, who were fighting severe and sustained drought, to build small dams and impound water in stock ponds. Dominy had risen to become U.S. Commissioner of Reclamation, the agency in the Department of the Interior which impounds water for as much as two hundred miles behind such constructions as Glen Canyon Dam, Grand Coulee Dam, Flaming Gorge Dam, Hoover Dam. Proudly, he drove the swelling grasslands of the high, dry range, while I scribbled airy notes about the "wide, expansive landscape, the beguiling patterns of perspective, the unending buttes, flat or nippled, spaced out to the horizon like stone chessmen." The grasses stirred under the wind and the range seemed uninhabited farther than the eye could see, but the ranchers in 1969 were still tucked into the draws, and their cattle were drinking from a thousand ponds. Dominy had lived in a stone dugout with his wife and infant daughter. For heat and cooking, they had a coal-burning stove. Dominy dug the coal himself out of a hillside.

The Orin Line, known locally as the Coal Line, is in Campbell and Converse counties, Wyoming. It was cut through Thunder Basin National Grassland and now includes among its branches the branch to Black Thunder Mine. Where people like Dominy dug, by hand, coal that no one else much wanted, draglines the size of naval ships are exposing it now. On CTSBT, I mentioned that I meant to revisit Campbell County some day soon, to go where CTSBT goes, and to see the Powder River Basin (of which Thunder Basin is a part) as it has come to appear in the twenty-first century. Scott, who drives more than a million tons of coal from North Platte to Marysville per year, said he had never seen the source of the coal and had long been curious to go there. What was I doing "the day after tomorrow?" We could drive up to the Coal Line in his car and maybe catch a train into a mine. The mine turns in the southern Powder River Basin begin and end at Bill, Wyoming, and that was no big deal or distance from North Platte—not much over three hundred miles.

In his Suburban, we were barely nine miles from his home when we approached the tracks at Birdwood, the west end of Bailey Yard. Lights flashed, gates dropped in front of us, and we watched the arriving headlight of a coal train. "Son of a bitch!" Scott complained. In no great hurry, the mile and a half of train went by, then a second son of a bitch came along before the first one cleared.

We went northwest on roads that were almost always close to tracks. Scott never looked at a map or paid much attention to road signs, but—to see where he was—he looked routinely at railroad mileposts. At another grade crossing, another coal train stopped us. We entered Wyoming in a freezing rain. In the B.N.S.F. yard at Guernsey were ten parallel coal trains. Through the rain, we saw sunlight on snow of the Laramie Range. Before long, the rain against our windshield turned into snow. North of Lightning Creek, the pump jacks of oil fields dotted the range. Bill had a regional school in a double-wide trailer, four kids in the school. As if Bill were pretending that it was not the only town in four thousand square miles, the post office, the general store, and Dry Creek Community Hall were closely clustered. The post office, 82631, was boarded up, the Zip Code defunct. The town's resident population was one—the storekeeper. Sitting in Bill's railroad yard as we arrived were eight miles of coal trains.

Scott arranged for us to deadhead on CCTBT, coming from St. Clair, Michigan, and going to Black Thunder Mine. The train was scheduled to leave Bill at seven-forty in the morning, with David L. Morgan, conductor, and Eric M. Renstrom, engineer. At seven-forty in the morning, we had all been waiting in the crew locker room for upward of an hour, but no call was forthcoming for CCTBT. An hour later, there had still been no call for CCTBT, or for any other train. About a dozen crewmen were waiting, gathering the minutes of their twelve hours. The dialogue might have been coming off a circular tape:

"Fucking CRZ—can't remember shit."

"Today is National Pick-on-Tom Day."

"Shit. I can take it."

"Fucking CRZ—can't remember shit."

There was writing over a urinal in the grouting of a cinder-block wall: "Republicans Like to Cornhole Each Others + Wives + Chickens." Some of the guys wore chains on their boots to deal with winter. There was a lot of Mephistophelian facial hair—the caterpillar sideburns, the full beard, the mustache as bilateral semaphore.

Dave Morgan said, "Welcome to the Coal Line. Meaning you wait, and wait. Daytime dispatchers are a pain in the ass." And he laughed. Then, referring to the day's traffic, he added, "We've got about a hundred trains in here as we speak." And he laughed. Dave was a big guy, handsome—six-three—with a cavernous voice; and the laugh was explosive, like a chain saw starting up. The saw had a problem in its fuel line, always choking out as abruptly as it started, as if he threw a switch in mid-yok. He wore jeans, a jean jacket. His thick brown hair was parted near the middle. He said he had waited in the locker room as much as eleven hours and thirty minutes to be called to a train.

Mary Ellen Sherwin, an engineer, came into the room. She had waited from 9:50 P.M. until 1:50 A.M. the night before, and had then driven a train to and from Belle Ayr Mine. Sixty-six years old with long white hair, she wore jeans, a jean jacket, and under her jacket a V-neck cotton sweater with horizontal grays and whites like the broadened stripes of a railroad hat from the days of steam. Addressing Dave Morgan, she remarked, "You asshole."

Dave replied, "That's Mister Asshole to you."

She said, "Where are you going?"

He said, "Thunder."

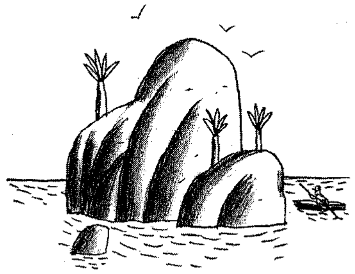
She had grown up on a ranch northeast of Bill, and now lived in Douglas, thirty-five miles south. She left for home.

When she had gone, Dave said, "They don't make enough jeweller's rouge to polish off her edges."

After four hours, a crewman spoke of "waiting on the railroad, all the livelong day." At ten-fifty-seven, the address system finally mentioned Dave's and Eric's train. Three minutes later, we were in the cab. At eleven-fifteen, we moved, into a whiteout fog.

If you would like to torture someone, either drip water on him for thirty-six hours or take him up the Coal Line. Eric stopped at a red signal where the yard tracks of Bill met the main roadbed. On a turn of ninety miles, we had travelled a train-length, a mile and a half. The dispatchers who were controlling the movements of every train on the line were in B.N.S.F.'s dispatching center in Fort Worth, Texas. Ours spoke often and even hopefully to Eric and Dave, but there was nothing she could do. The line belonged jointly to the two largest railroads in America, and so many coal trains from so many places were there to collect the coal that the congestion had gone critical and the line was arteriosclerotic. Not that we could see the other trains. For ninety minutes, we stared forward at two red dots in fog.

Dave Morgan said, "As long as we don't see something going by us going into Thunder, we're O.K." Each train is a "slot." Mine to mine on the Orin Line, railroads work out loading slots, like airlines sharing an airport. At twelve-fifty-eight, a light turned yellow and we moved. Looking up at the signal, Dave said, "You got to have faith that that son of a bitch ain't lying to you, ha-ha-ha-h . . ." and we slid onto the main, heading north up the leftmost of the three tracks under Centralized Traffic Control. And soon we were flying, or so it seemed, crossing the Dry Fork of the Cheyenne at twenty miles an hour.



The virtual voice of a trackside scanner addressed the interior of the cab, saying, "No dee fex. Temm purr ah choor fiff teen duh grees." The fog densened. A headlight suddenly appeared in it and we were meeting a coal train coming down from Caballo, a small mine by Powder River standards, yet larger than every mine in the East. The train had made fifty-seven miles in ten and a half hours, but it was speeding up some and went by us in nine minutes.

The roadbed was visible enough, and Scott Davis remarked that we were looking at a state-of-the-art railroad—triple track with crossovers, concrete ties, the ballast so neatly bevelled that it looked like a new driveway. Wood ties are still in use elsewhere, and are more flexible, but concrete ties are what you want if you are annually running over them four hundred million gross tons of coal trains. (Not readily visible was the great quantity of coal dust that had filled in the ballast and, in months to come, would cause a couple of derailments by impeding the drainage of unusual rains.)

At one-thirty, we were stopped again, for what turned out to be ninety minutes. We had gone seven miles. "Fluidity" is perhaps the most hallowed word in railroad operations. The Santa Monica Freeway between Sepulveda and La Cienega is more fluid than the Orin Line between Bill and Belle Ayr. Think of Bay Bridge traffic backed up to Sacramento, think bumper-to-bumper backward from the New Jersey Palisades to the Mississippi River. Dave and Eric, sitting back, had their legs draped across their consoles. I had to look over their toes to stare, and stare, and stare at the red signals, in every moment wanting and expecting them to turn. With C.T.C., the fog was only a symbolic factor. Dave said, "It feels like we're all alone out here but we've probably got sixty to seventy trains on the tracks up ahead. This is what it's like on the Coal Line. At least they didn't fix you up with nothing bogus. Ha-ha-ha-h..."

Eric went out the rear door of the cab and along the catwalk to the second unit, where he picked up a TV dinner he was cooking in the heat between the turbo and the main engine block. Until recently a conductor, Eric was a new engineer. With a full helmet of light-brown hair, fine features, alert eyes, he resembled the film idol Robert Redford but was better-looking. As he ate, he said, slowly and quietly, "I still have to learn how to get a handle on the stress side of it, trying to find a happy medium between caring too much and too little."

"We're parked," Dave said, his voice less optimistic than the trackside scanner's. Turning to the economics of the situation, he added, "We're really nothing. We're pretty much the plankton of the whole picture. Ha-ha."

An empty beaner drifted by—EMHKBTM—on its way from Tennessee to Black Thunder Mine. In other words, something was going by us going into Thunder. A beaner is a B.N.S.F. train. "E" for empty, in its B.N.S.F. seven-letter name. Beaners kept appearing: CCAMSLP, on its way from Caballo Mine to Smithers Lake, in Texas; ECEBATM, returning to Antelope Mine from a plant in southern Illinois that no longer uses Illinois coal. B.N.S.F. is made up of the collective remains of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, the Great Northern Railway, and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe. A fallen flag is a railroad that no longer exists. In the eye of the beholder is whether B.N.S.F. is a streamlined modern enterprise or a bouquet of fallen flags. Either way, it is America's second-longest railroad, and its recumbent flags also include Spokane, Portland and Seattle; Northern Pacific; and St. Louis–San Francisco, the old Frisco line.

If you develop a monopoly on the railroads in Monopoly, you are holding four fallen flags. Since the breakup of Conrail, in 1999, most of the old Eastern railroads are parts of Norfolk Southern or parts of CSX. Illinois Central is a fallen flag. It is part of Canadian National. These train mergers are like bluefish wars. Southern Pacific, which nearly merged with the Santa Fe, was consumed by Union Pacific in 1996. The modern Union Pacific is actually a consolidation of eight or ten railroads—a network, and more like a communications grid than a straight-line railroad. Its antiquarium of fallen flags also includes the Missouri Pacific, the Western Pacific, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad (Katy line), and the Chicago & North Western, which was struggling to build the Orin Line when U.P. came along with its mouth wide open. As Paul Fitzpatrick had summarized all this, "The U.P. went from a family-type company to a military-type company with the mergers, but we finally got them to think a little bit like what we think they should."

Around 3 P.M., a loaded U.P. coal train, coming down from the Antelope Mine, went by us on the middle track. Of the two red dots we were staring at, one above the other, the upper one related to the track we were on. The lower one was there to indicate a diversion route. The lower one turned yellow but resembled gold. After Eric put the throttle in Notch 1, we actually moved, crossing over from Track 3 to Track 2.

Traced from a map, the Coal Line has the raceme structure of a bluebell or a lily of the valley, as dainty an image as nature can provide for a stem whose flowers are coal mines. Black Thunder Junction, 5:45 P.M., nineteen degrees, dark, snowing.

Eight miles into Black Thunder, the branch line ended in a great loop, where the long train would pass through a loading silo while swinging around to go back the other way. Going into Thunder, we approached a switch that was closed but should have been open. What to do? Leaving the cab, Dave said, "I go over and flop the switch. This is known as a one-eyed crossover."

Crossed over, we soon stopped, as ordered, near a footbridge, before going over a scale. The snow was heavy now, like bugs filling up our headlight beam, but through the swarm we could see the silo, as large as a twenty-five-story office building, sheathed in light. Eric took the lead locomotive over the scale at 1.5 miles per hour, then went up to 3.5 for the rest of the train. Reading the tare weights on a screen in the cab, Dave said, "This is a pretty consistent consist." While the hoppers behind us were crossing the scale, we went under a conveyor belt that was carrying coal from a remote pit into the silo complex. The belt was three miles long. From nearer pits, coal was being brought in by haul trucks too large to share the name with anything else called a truck. Their tires looked the way bagels would look to a virus. Black Thunder was working four pits, and the whole spread of it was far too extensive to be comprehended from a train, but Scott Davis and I had driven around the basin after we arrived.

The mines were mapped in blocks: "West Overburden. Middle Overburden. East Overburden. Coal." The pits were excavated canyons. They were a couple of hundred feet deep and two and three miles long. The walking draglines gnawing at the overburden needed tall rigid masts to help support their four-chord booms. They were eight stories tall and weighed four hundred tons. Their booms were hundreds of feet long. Like the locomotives that would haul the coal away, the walking draglines required electric power. Their walk was a saurian heave, an exponential lurch, friction smoke rising from the ground around them. As they walked-dug-walked-dug their way up the coal seams, their tails dragged along behind them. The tails were cables six inches thick delivering electrical power made with coal to draglines digging coal. We saw three D11 bulldozers shoving overburden to the edge of a canyon and over the side, going back for more overburden, and returning to the lip, always stopping a foot or two short of a two-hundred-foot plunge.

Scott said, "I thought railroads were dangerous, but, man, these coal mines are really dangerous." In the presence of nineteen-thousand-ton trains, three-hundred-ton haul trucks, and hundred-ton bulldozers moving on unstable ground, blasts are routine and rocks fall like bombs.

"Those big trucks could back over a pickup and not even know it," Scott said.

The pickups knew it. They carried whip antennas twenty feet high with bright-red lights at the top.

The faces of the canyon walls were

for the most part jet black—beds of coal eight to ten stories thick. With distance westward toward the Bighorns, the seams go deeper under the overburden. In fifty more years of westward digging and filling, the seams may be too deep to mine, at least in the way that they are mined now. At that point, the Powder River Basin will still contain—at the rate of sixty loaded coal trains a day—enough coal for two hundred years. It began as peat in Paleocene bogs about sixty million years before the present.

We had seen old ranch buildings falling into the ground, and a few cattle standing up. A sign: "Livestock at Large." Windmills were still pumping water for cattle. To the horizons, there were no trees. Deer and antelope were everywhere at play, much too young to care what had happened to the range.

About six months before the present, I read Kim Stanley Robinson's "Red Mars," a heralded work of science fiction that describes the colonization and mineral exploitation of the fourth planet. Robinson's characters excavate Mars with backhoes, front-end loaders, tractors, graders, and "one John Deere/Volvo Martian bulldozer, hydrazine-powered, thermally protected, semiautonomous, fully programmable." There are "giant dump trucks . . . full of black boulders."

" 'Monsters like this are all over the planet,' he said to Nadia. . . . 'Cutting, scraping, digging, filling . . .' "

The monsters are "equipped to be teleoperated from indoor stations, their decision algorithms handling the details," while human operators peer at screens.

" 'Watch your screens, you lazy bastards!' "

Colonials from "rich northern countries" mine the Great Escarpment and "the island mesas of Nilosyrtis." One of their pits is "a kilometer in diameter, seven kilometers deep." They use the "Allied hydraulic impact hammer," and they "drill cased holes through large boulders" with the Sandvik Tubex boring machine.

"The train to Burroughs carried mostly freight, thirty narrow cars of it . . . running over a superconducting magnetic piste." Between Earth and Mars, strings of orbiting vehicles, also called trains, come and go in "a continuous procession" run by "a large force of local traffic controllers."

And now CCTBT was about to turn into CBTCT. Its nose was close to the silo. It was moving steadily at .4 miles per hour. Scott Davis and I went out of the cab and back along the catwalk in the noise and the snow, stepping over to the second unit, and continuing along its catwalk to the far end, because the second unit was facing backward. We got into the cab there and watched. Next to us was the first of a hundred and thirty-four empty hoppers. The looming silo was something like a grain elevator, reaching out with great arms to the crushers that supplied it. Moving inside, the lead locomotives passed three control booths, whose bay windows were not entirely black with dust. As the first hopper drew abreast of a booth, a pair of steel sheets was lowered from above, coffering the interior of the car in the way that a dentist places baffles around a tooth he's about to fill. Then coal dropped, explosively, between the sheets. A hundred and fifteen measured tons fell into the gondola in one second. A six-kiloton cloud shot up into the silo's black interior. Under the crash of coal, the alumi-

MR. SCIENCE TIMES
THE END IS ONLY TWO BILLION YEARS AWAY!

MEN'S FAULT
MAGAZINE
SIPRESS

• •

num gondola staggered, wrenched downward, and looked as if it might flatten. From above, the baffles were lifted. The coal in the hopper was maybe five feet above the rims, a calculated fluff that would settle down. At .4 miles per hour, the second gondola was now in position. The baffles came down, and the coal fell. Crunch, cloud, and the next car was in position. Emerging from the silo on a slight curve, we watched twenty cars totter in the dust under the weight of falling coal before the interior of the silo passed out of sight, with more than a mile of gondolas to follow.

We were scarcely eastbound off the loop when Dave's and Eric's time, under the hours-of-service law, ran out. Eric stopped the loaded coal train. We all descended. A fresh crew got on, and the van that had brought them carried us away, past a very large sign that said:

THUNDER BASIN COAL COMPANY
WELCOME TO
BLACK THUNDER MINE

DON'T GET CAUGHT IN
THE WEB OF UNSAFE ACTS

In the Powder River Basin, a congestion of trains may be tedious while you're in it, the railroading seemingly inefficient, but that is just an illusion lit up in red signals. The place is not as organized as an anthill, no; but it is something like one. From the mines along the Orin Line, twenty-three thousand coal trains annually emerge—that is, about thirty-four thousand miles of rolling coal, going off as units to become carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide, water, ash, and heat, and to air-condition a population so needful of comfort that the demand for the coal is greater in summer than in winter.

Here is one example chosen not at random but for its distance and size: Coming and going, loaded and empty, thirty-five sets—thirty-five dedicated unit coal trains—are in almost perpetual motion between the Powder River Basin and Georgia's Plant Scherer, twenty miles from Macon. There is a loop at each end, eighteen hundred miles between. Owned by a consortium led by Georgia Power, Plant Scherer, in megawatts produced, is the largest coal-fired power plant in the Western Hemisphere. It pays more than anyone else for the transportation of Powder River coal, and not long ago B.N.S.F. snatched the contract from Union Pacific.

Trains with names like CBTMMHS go down to Guernsey and then cross Nebraska and drop through Missouri to the Ozarks, where they test tonnage versus horsepower on 1.5-per-cent grades. B.N.S.F. had to lengthen its sidings and fix up its track for the coal trains, as did Norfolk Southern, which absorbs the trains at Memphis. New crews take their turns from Memphis to Sheffield, and Sheffield to Chattanooga, and Chattanooga to Atlanta's Inman Yard. The run from Inman and back to Inman via Lamar County is known inside the trains as the Scherer turn.

By the grade crossing in Juliette, Georgia, a fried-green-tomato sandwich is as good as it is famous at the Whistle Stop Café. On a freezing winter day, when the temperatures in Georgia were not much milder than they were in Wyoming, I had a fried-green-tomato sandwich for lunch with my longtime friend Sam Candler, of Sharpsburg, Georgia, and Joe Fulford, a Norfolk Southern trainmaster, and Adam Crate, whose title was Road Foreman of Engines.

Close to the Ocmulgee River, Juliette is a hamlet in the pinewoods—a cluster of houses near the grade crossing by the trackside café. In the early nineteen-nineties, the town flashed with borrowed vividness after Hollywood used it as an on-location set for a memoir that included a steam locomotive coming through the pines and killing a young man whose foot had been caught and wedged in the rails near the Whistle Stop Café, which looks to this day as it did in the movie.

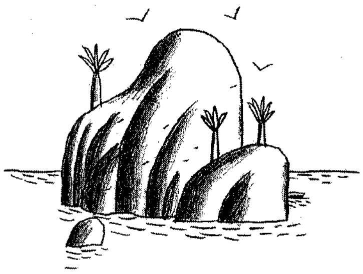
I was still enjoying my fried-green species of BLT when the nose of a locomotive appeared in a window and stopped. Its presence in this place was no less incongruous than the appearance of Chief Red Cloud at New York's Cooper Union to deliver an address in Sioux. Instead of a modest Norfolk Southern locomotive, there from the mountain West on this antebellum single track sat Burlington Northern Santa Fe 5639, color of reddish wheat, with seven thousand feet of coal behind it in the trees. Lee Stuckey was the engineer, Brian Nix the conductor—Inman to Inman, the Scherer turn. On a yellow slip above Lee Stuckey's head were the initials of Black Thunder Mine.

Over wooden ties, we went down through the loblollies in a narrow series of S curves, the trees so tight to the train that on this clear day visibility from the cab did not extend much farther than it had in the fog in Wyoming. More forest curves eventually led to a long left where we could look back at the beginnings of CBTMMHS's hundred and twenty-four cars. Then, to our left, we passed a long yard with five parallel tracks, where five coal trains could, if necessary, be parked, or "staged," waiting to advance and drop their coal at Plant Scherer. That should have suggested the dimensions of the scene to follow, but the significance of the yard did not really register with me, and the surprise was near total when we bent around a long curve and the dense curtain of pines seemed to open theatrically from left to right, revealing a loop of track at least a mile in circumference around an infield filled with a million tons of coal (earthmovers and bulldozers crawling like insects on the coal), and, on the far side of the loop, a trestle forty feet in the air and eight hundred feet long, and behind the trestle a pair of rectangular buildings a quarter of a mile over the ground and close to three hundred feet high but dwarfed beneath the overbearing immensity of four hyperbolic cooling towers that came into view one at a time, their broad flared rims five hundred feet above the ground, and two smokestacks a thousand feet high, reaching above the scene like minarets. It was an electrical Xanadu in homage to a craven need, its battlements emitting cumuli of steam.

After being switched to the right at the top of the loop, we started around it counterclockwise. Coal trains are so heavy that they are routed through the loop in alternate directions, to distribute the assault on the track. In the infield to our left were five hundred acres of Campbell County, Wyoming, fifty feet deep—the million-ton reserve known at Plant Scherer as the "pile." CBTMMHS circumscribed the pile until—close by Plant Scherer—it stopped at the head of the unloading trestle, which extended before it between rows of bright lights. This train had left Wyoming five days ago. Plant Scherer would burn everything in it in less than eight hours.

Sam and I descended from the cab, the better to watch the unloading. Like the New Jersey Turnpike high over the Meadowlands, the trestle was supported on concrete croquet wickets that divided the space below it into twenty-one bays. Between yellow railings, the red-orange locomotive began to move onto the trestle, followed by stainless hoppers heaped with coal. Bin doors opened in the bottom of the first car, and, in three or four seconds, down through the trestle fell a hundred and fifteen tons of coal. The sound was nearly as explosive as the sound of the filling had been in Wyoming. At some plants, coal cars are rolled over—literally flipped on swivel couplings—but such rotary dumping, spectacular as it may be, is too slow for a place like Plant Scherer, which Jeremy Taylor, an authority on coal trains, has called "the most efficient unloading operation in the country," with its trestle, its electric contact points, its compressed-air opening of the hopper doors. The train was moving at three miles an hour, and the cars were unloading like sticks of bombs. The coal was mounding in the bays. As each load began to drop, a geyser of dust shot upward from the car. Down in the bays, the dust coming off the fallen coal spread out in a thick black cloud. There were sprayers to diminish the dust but the sprayers were frozen. Sam had radically changed. His face had blackened. His beard was much younger. Now the locomotive stopped hard to shake up frozen coal. In the bays of the trestle, mountains quickly grew, and big yellow Cats did what they could to smooth them. As coal floods the bays, it can fill them high enough to derail the train. After the locomotive had gone far past the end of the trestle, the cars kept coming and the geysers kept rising. The uncontrollable dust far below had the look of an occurring disaster, the spreading clouds dark and flat as if they were derived from incendiary bombs.

Plant Scherer can unload a coal train in thirty minutes but seldom does. If Plant Scherer takes more than four hours to unload a coal train, it pays Norfolk Southern a demurrage fee. Norfolk Southern, for its part, has seventy hours to get the train from the Mississippi River to Plant Scherer and back, or Norfolk Southern pays a demurrage fee. Cars may have to be set out because of freezing—hopper doors frozen, the coal in solid blocks like frozen peas.



Coal under the trestle in forty-foot dunes soon filled all twenty-one bays. Sprinklers were finally thawed. A rainbow hung in a drifting black cloud. Like a chambered nautilus, the train had come back upon itself and was now completely annular. At the far side of the great loop, the lead locomotive was all but touching the hoppers that were still arriving.

Under the trestle, a chute was carrying the coal off to be crushed and then pulverized and then mixed with air for immediate burning, in the way that an automobile engine mixes air with gasoline and explodes the vapor. Pulverization helps make it possible to burn the coal at a temperature low enough to limit nitrous oxide, and the fireballs don't get much hotter than three thousand degrees. The heat, of course, boils water—eighty-one million gallons of Ocmulgee River water a day—in boilers twenty-five stories tall. Steam from the boiling water turns four generators lined up in a single room a quarter of a mile long.

Damon Woodson, a mechanical engineer at Plant Scherer who had worked in a nuclear power plant, said, "I never really understood nuclear until I came here." That million-ton pile on reserve in the train loop was equivalent to one truckful of mined uranium, he said. "The way to go is nuclear if you want to have power. To get a million BTUs, fuel oil costs nine dollars, natural gas six dollars, coal a dollar-eighty-five, nuclear fifty cents. We'll see how it all turns out."

Plant Scherer burns nearly thirteen hundred coal trains a year—two thousand miles of coal cars, twelve million tons of the bedrock of Wyoming. It unloads, on average, three and a half coal trains a day. On a wall inside the plant are pictures of yellow finches, turkey vultures, and other local wildlife on Plant Scherer's twelve thousand acres of land. Asked why Plant Scherer needs twelve thousand acres (six miles by three miles), Woodson answered readily, "Because we are thinking of expanding." ♦

(*This is the second part of a two-part article.*)

FICTION

EARLY MUSIC

BY JEFFREY EUGENIDES

As soon as he came in the front door, Rodney went straight to the music room. That was what he called it, wryly but not without some hope: the music room. It was a small, dogleg-shaped fourth bedroom that had been created when the building was cut up into apartments. It qualified as a music room because it contained his clavichord.

There it stood on the unswept floor: Rodney's clavichord. It was apple-green with gold trim and bore a scene of geometric gardens on the inside of its lifted lid. Modelled on the Bodechtel clavichords built in the seventeen-nineties, Rodney's had come from the Early Music Store, in Edinburgh, three years ago. Still, resting there majestically in the dim light—it was winter in Chicago—the clavichord looked as though it had been waiting for Rodney to play it not only for the nine and a half hours since he'd left for work but for a couple of centuries at least.

You didn't need that big a room for a clavichord. A clavichord wasn't a piano. Spinets, virginals, fortepianos, clavichords, and even harpsichords were relatively small instruments. The eighteenth-century musicians who'd played them were small. Rodney was big, however—six feet three. He sat down gently on the narrow bench. Carefully he slid his knees under the keyboard. With closed eyes he began to play from memory a Sweelinck prelude.

Early music is rational, mathematical, a little bit stiff, and so was Rodney. He'd been that way long before he'd ever seen a clavichord or written an (unfinished) doctoral dissertation on temperament systems during the German Reformation. But Rodney's immersion in the work of Bach père et fils had only fortified his native inclinations. The other piece of furniture in the music room was a small teak desk. In its drawers and pigeonholes were the super-organized files Rodney kept: health-insurance records; alphabetized appliance manuals along with warranties; the twins' immunization histories, birth certificates, and Social Security cards; plus three years' worth of monthly budgets stipulating household expenses down to the maximum allowed for heating (Rodney kept the apartment a bracing fifty-eight degrees). A little cold weather was good for you. Cold weather was like Bach: it sorted the mind. On top of the desk was this month's folder, marked "FEB '05." It contained three credit-card statements with horrendous running balances and the ongoing correspondence from the collection agency that was dunning Rodney for defaulting on his monthly payments to the Early Music Store.

RICHARD McGUIRE

His back was straight as he played; his face twitched. Behind closed eyelids, his eyeballs fluttered in time with the quick notes.

And then the door swung open and Imogene, who was six, shouted in her longshoreman's voice:

"Daddy! Dinner!"

Having completed this task, she slammed the door shut again. Rodney stopped. Looking at his watch, he saw that he'd been playing—practicing—for exactly four minutes.

The house Rodney grew up in had been neat and tidy. They used to do that in those days. They used to houseclean. They, of course, meant she: a mother. All those years of vacuumed carpets and spick-and-span kitchens, of shirts that miraculously picked themselves up off the floor only to reappear freshly laundered in the dresser drawer—the whole functioning efficiency that used to be a house was no more. Women had given all that up when they went to work.

Or even when they didn't. Rebecca, Rodney's wife, didn't work outside the home. She worked in the apartment, in a back bedroom. She didn't call it a bedroom. She called it an office. Rodney had a music room in which he played little music. Rebecca had an office in which she did little business. But she was in there a lot, all day, while Rodney was at work at a real office in the city.

As he came out of the sanctuary of the music room, Rodney stepped around the cardboard boxes and rolls of bubble wrap and stray toys crowding the hall. He turned sideways to squeeze by the squad of winter coats hanging on the wall above crusty boots and single mittens. Moving into the living room, he stepped on something that felt like a mitten. But it wasn't. It was a stuffed mouse. Sighing, Rodney picked it up. A little bigger than a real mouse, this particular mouse was baby blue in color and wore a black beret. It appeared to have a cleft palate.

"You're supposed to be cute," Rodney said to the mouse. "Exert yourself."

The mice were what Rebecca did. They were part of a line called Mice 'n' Warm™, which included, at present, four "characters": Modernist Mouse, Boho Mouse, Surfer-Realist Mouse, and Flower-Power Mouse. Each artistic rodent was filled with aromatic pellets and was irresistibly squeezable. The selling point (still mainly theoretical) was that you could put these mice in the microwave and they would come out muffin-warm and smelling like potpourri.

Rodney carried the mouse in cupped hands, like an injured thing, into the kitchen.

"Escapee," he said, by way of greeting.

Rebecca looked up from the sink, where she was straining pasta, and frowned. "Throw that in the trash," she said. "It's a reject."

From the twins at the table came a cry of alarm. They didn't like the mice to meet untimely ends. Springing up, they rushed their father with clutching hands.

Rodney held Boho Mouse higher.

Immy, who had Rebecca's sharp chin along with her clear-eyed determination, climbed up on a chair. Tallulah, always the more instinctive and feral of the two, just grabbed Rodney's arm and started walking up his leg.

While this assault was under way, Rodney said to Rebecca, "Let me guess. It's the mouth."

"It's the mouth," Rebecca said. "And the smell. Smell it."

In order to do so, Rodney had to turn and pop the mouse into the microwave, hitting the warm-up button.

After twenty seconds, he took the warm mouse out and held it to his nose.

"It's not that bad," he said. "But I see what you mean. A little more armpit than would be ideal."

"It's supposed to be musk."

"On the other hand," said Rodney, "B.O. is perfect for a bohemian."

"I've got five kilos of musk-scented pellets," moaned Rebecca, "which are now useless."

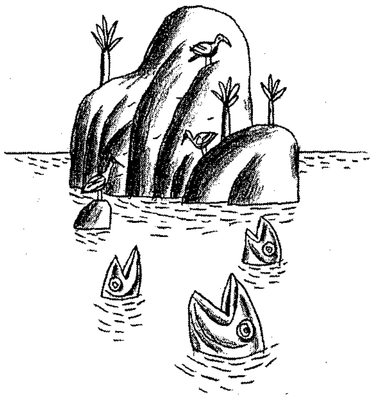
Rodney crossed the kitchen and stepped on the trash-can pedal, raising the lid. He tossed the mouse in and let the trash can close. It felt good to toss the mouse. He wanted to do it again.

It had probably not been a wise move to buy the clavichord. For one thing, it cost a small fortune. And they didn't have a fortune of any size to spend. Also, Rodney had stopped playing professionally ten years earlier. After the twins were born, he'd stopped playing altogether. To drive all the way down to Hyde Park from Logan Square, and then to drive around and around looking for a place to park (Hyde Park, went the joke, you can't hide and you can't park), and then to unpeel his U. of Chicago I.D. from his wallet, holding a thumb over the ridiculously out-of-date photo while waving it at the security guard, in order to gain admittance to practice room 113, where for an hour, on the battered but not untuneful university clavichord, Rodney would work through a few bourrées and roundelays, just to keep a hand in—all that became too difficult after the kids were born. Back in the days when Rodney and Rebecca had both been pursuing Ph.D.s (back when they were childless and super-focussed and surviving on yogurt and brewer's yeast), Rodney had spent three or four hours a day playing the department clavichord. The harpsichord next door had been in great demand. But the clavichord was always free. This was because it was a pedal clavichord, that rare beast, and no one liked to play it. It was a speculative replica of an early-eighteenth-century clavichord, and the pedal unit (which some lead-footed student had stomped on pretty thoroughly) was a little funky. But Rodney got used to it, and from then on the clavichord was like Rodney's own personal instrument, until he dropped out of the program and became a father and took a job on the North Side giving piano lessons at the Old Town School of Folk Music.

The thing about early music was: nobody knew quite what it sounded like. Disputes about how to tune a harpsichord or clavichord constituted a good part of the discipline. The question was "How had Bach tuned his harpsichord?" And nobody knew. People argued about what Johann Sebastian had meant by "*wohltemperirt*." They tuned their instruments in a historically likely manner and studied the hand-drawn schematics on the title pages of various of Bach's compositions.

Rodney had intended to settle this question in his dissertation. He was going to figure out, once and for all, exactly how Bach had tuned his harpsichord, how his music had sounded at the time, and, therefore, how it should be played now. To do this, he would have to go to Germany. He would have to go, in fact, to East Germany (Leipzig) in order to examine the actual harpsichord on which Bach himself had composed and onto whose keyboard (so it was rumored) the Master had written his preferred markings. In the fall of 1987, with the help of a doctoral grant—and with Rebecca on a *Stiftung* at the Freie Universität—Rodney had set off for West Berlin. They lived in a two-room sublet near Savignyplatz featuring a sit-down shower and a toilet with a shelf. The leaseholder was a guy named Frank, from Montana, who'd come to Berlin to build sets for experimental theatre. A married professor had also used the place to entertain his girlfriends. In the flannel-sheeted bed where Rebecca and Rodney had sex, they encountered miscellaneous pubic hairs. The professor's shaving equipment remained in the tiny, malodorous bathroom. On the toilet shelf their feces landed high and dry, ready for inspection. It would have been unbearable if they hadn't been twenty-six and poor and in love. Rodney and Rebecca washed the sheets and hung them out to dry on the balcony. They got used to the dinky tub. They continued to complain about, and be entirely grossed out by, the shelf.

West Berlin wasn't what Rodney had expected. It was nothing like early music. West Berlin was completely irrational and unmathematical, not stiff but loose. It was full of war widows, draft dodgers, squatters, anarchists. Rodney didn't like the cigarette smoke. The beer made him feel bloated. So he escaped, going as often as he could to the Philharmonie or the Deutsche Oper.



Rebecca had fared better. She'd become friendly with the people in the *Wohngemeinschaft* one floor above them. Wearing soft-soled Maoist shoes or ankle bracelets or ironic monocles, the six young Germans pooled their money, swapped partners, and held deep-throated conversations about Kantian ethics as it applied to traffic disputes. Every few months, one or another of them disappeared to Tunisia or India or returned to Hamburg to enter the family export business. At Rebecca's urging, Rodney politely attended their parties, but he always felt too scrubbed in their company, too apolitical, too blithely American.

In October, when he went to the East German Embassy to pick up his academic visa, Rodney was told that his request had been denied. The minor diplomat who relayed this news wasn't an East Bloc functionary but a kind-looking, balding, nervous man, who seemed genuinely sorry. He himself was from Leipzig, he said, and as a child had attended the Thomaskirche, where Bach had been the director of choir and music. Rodney appealed to the American Embassy, but they were powerless to help. He made a frantic call to his adviser, Professor Breskin, back in Chicago, who was going through a divorce and was less than compassionate. In a sardonic voice he'd said, "Got any other dissertation ideas?"

The lindens along the Ku'damm lost their leaves. In Rodney's opinion, the leaves had never turned orange enough, red enough, to die. But this was how autumn was handled in Prussia. Winter, too, never quite got to be winter: rain, gray skies, scant snow—just a dampness that worked its way into Rodney's bones as he walked from church concert to church concert. He had six months left in Berlin and no idea how to fill them.

And then, in early spring, a wonderful thing had happened. Lisa Turner, the cultural attaché at the American Consulate, invited Rodney to tour Germany, playing Bach, as part of a Deutsche-Amerikanische Freundschaft Programm. For a month and a half, Rodney travelled through mostly small towns in Swabia, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Bavaria, putting on concerts in local halls. He stayed in dollhouse-size hotel rooms full of dollhouse knickknacks; he slept on

EVERYTHING

Everything—
a bumptious, stuck-up word.
It should be written in quotes.
It pretends to miss nothing,
to gather, hold, contain, and have.
While all the while it's just
a shred of a gale.

—*Wislawa Szymborska*

(*Translated, from the Polish, by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh.*)

single beds under wonderfully soft duvets. Lisa Turner accompanied him, seeing to Rodney's every need and taking particular care of his travelling companion. This wasn't Rebecca. Rebecca had stayed in Berlin to write the first draft of her thesis. Rodney's companion was a clavichord, made by Hass in 1761 and, then and now, the single most beautiful, expressive, and finicky clavichord Rodney's trembling, delighted hands had ever touched.

Rodney wasn't famous. But the Hass clavichord was. In Munich, three separate newspaper photographers had shown up before the concert at the Rathaus to take a picture of the clavichord. Rodney stood behind it, a mere retainer.

That the audiences who came to see Rodney weren't large, that the universally retired members of these audiences were permanently stone-faced from years and years of faithfully enduring high culture, that fifteen minutes into a piece by Schiedemann a third of the audience would be asleep, their mouths open as though singing along or sustaining one long complaint—none of that bothered Rodney. He was getting paid, which had never happened before. The halls that Lisa Turner optimistically rented were two- or three-hundred-seat places. With twenty-five or sixteen or (in Heidelberg) three people in attendance, Rodney had the feeling that he was alone, playing for himself. He tried to hear the notes the Master had played more than two hundred years earlier, to catch them on the wind of the moment and reproduce them. It was like bringing Bach back to life and going back in time simultaneously. This was what Rodney thought about as he played in those cavernous, echoing halls.

The Hass clavichord wasn't as thrilled as Rodney. The clavichord complained a lot. It didn't want to go back to 1761. It had done its work and wanted to rest, to retire, like the audience. The tangents broke and had to be repaired. A new key went dead every night.

Still, the early music rang out, prim and lurching and undeniably antique, and Rodney, its medium, like a man on a flying horse, maintained his balance on the stool. The keyboard rose and fell, thumped, and the music whirled on.

When he returned to Berlin in late May, Rodney found he had less enthusiasm for strict musicology. He wasn't sure anymore if he even wanted to be an academic. Instead of getting a Ph.D., he toyed with the idea of enrolling at the Royal Academy of Music, in London, and pursuing a performing career.

West Berlin, meanwhile, had been undoing and remaking Rebecca. In that walled, subsidized half-city, no one seemed to have a job. The comrades in the *Wohngemeinschaft* spent their time nurturing the sad orange trees on their concrete balcony. Volunteering at the Schwarzfahrer Theatre, Rebecca played electrified accompaniment, half Kraftwerk, half Kurt Weill, for the antic, anti-nuclear goings on onstage. Up late at night, sleeping ever later in the morning, she made little progress on her examination of Johann Georg Sulzer's "Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste" as it related to theoretical concepts of musical listening in eighteenth-century Germany. To be specific, while Rodney was away Rebecca had managed to write five pages.

They had a wonderful year in Berlin, Rodney and Rebecca. But their doctoral research led them to the inescapable conclusion that they didn't want to be doctors of anything.

They moved back to Chicago and drifted. Rodney joined an early-keyboard group that gave intermittent concerts. Rebecca took up painting. They moved to Bucktown and, a year later, to Logan Square. They lived on next to nothing. They lived like Boho Mouse.

Rodney's fortieth birthday found him with the flu. He got out of bed with a fever of a hundred and three, called the school to cancel his lessons, then got back into bed.

In the afternoon, Rebecca and the girls brought in a weird-looking birthday cake. Through gummed-up eyelids, Rodney saw the lemon sponge cake of the soundboard, the marzipan of the keys, and the chocolate slab of the lid supported by a peppermint stick.

Rebecca's gift was a plane ticket to Edinburgh and a down payment made out to the Early Music Store. "Do it," she said. "Just do it. You need it. We'll work it out. The mice are starting to sell."

That was three years ago. Now they were gathered around the gimpy-legged secondhand kitchen table, and Rebecca warned Rodney, "Don't answer the phone."

The twins were eating their usual naked pasta. The grownups, those gourmands, pasta with sauce.

"They called six times today."

"Who called?" asked Immy.

"Nobody," said Rebecca.

"The woman?" Rodney asked. "Darlene?"

"No. Somebody new. A man."

That didn't sound good. Darlene was almost family at this point. Considering all the letters she had sent, in ever bolder typefaces, and all the phone calls she'd made, politely asking for money, then demanding money, and finally making threats—considering the persistent entitlement, Darlene was like an alcoholic sister or a cousin with a gambling addiction. Except that in this case she held the moral high ground. Darlene wasn't the one who owed twenty-seven thousand dollars compounding

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Darlene, when she called, called from within the call-center honeycomb: in the background you could hear the buzz of numberless other worker bees. The job was to collect pollen. In that effort, they were beating their wings and, if need be, raising their stingers. Because he was a musician, Rodney heard all this acutely. Sometimes he drifted off and forgot all about the angry bee that was after him.

Darlene had ways of regaining his attention. Unlike a trolling telemarketer, she didn't make mistakes. She didn't mispronounce Rodney's name or mess up his address: she knew these by heart. Since it was easier to resist a stranger, the first time Darlene had called she'd introduced herself. She'd stated her mission and made it clear that she wasn't going away until she achieved it.

Now she had gone away.

"A man?" Rodney said.

Rebecca nodded. "A not very nice man."

Immy brandished her fork. "You said nobody called. How can a man be nobody?"

"I meant nobody you know, honey. Nobody you have to worry about."

Just then the cordless phone rang and Rebecca said, "Don't answer it."

Rodney took his napkin (which was in fact a paper towel) and folded it in his lap. In an elevated tone, he said for the girls' benefit, "People shouldn't call during dinner. It's impolite."

For the first two years, Rodney had kept up with the payments. But then he'd quit teaching at the Old Town School of Folk Music and had tried to go out on his own. Students came directly to his apartment, where he taught them on the clavichord (it was perfect preparation for the piano, he told their parents). For a while, Rodney made about twice as much as he'd been making before, but then the students began to drop out. No one liked the clavichord. It sounded weird, the kids said. Only a girl would play it, one boy said. In a panic, Rodney started renting a rehearsal room with a piano and holding lessons there, but soon he was making less than he'd made at Old Town. That was when he'd quit being a music teacher and taken his present job as a patients' records associate at an H.M.O.

By then, however, he'd defaulted on his payments to the Early Music Store. The interest rate rose and then (fine print in the loan agreement) skyrocketed. After that, he could never catch up.

Darlene had threatened him with repossession, but so far it hadn't happened. And so Rodney continued to play the clavichord fifteen minutes in the morning and fifteen minutes at night.

"Some good news, though," Rebecca said, after the phone had stopped ringing. "I got a new client today."

"Great. Who?"

"Stationery store out in Des Plaines."

"How many mice they want?"

"Twenty. To start."

Rodney, who was capable of keeping straight the 1/6 comma fifths of Bach's keyboard bearing (F-C-G-D-A-E) from the pure fifths (E-B-F#-C#) and the devilish 1/12 comma fifths (C#-G#-D#-A#), had no trouble performing the following calculation in his head: Each one of the Mice 'n' Warm mice sold for $15. Rebecca's take was forty per cent. That came to $6 per mouse. Since each mouse cost roughly $3.50 to make, the profit on one mouse was $2.50. Times twenty came to fifty bucks.

He did another calculation: $27,000 divided by $2.50 came to 10,800. The stationery store wanted twenty mice to start. Rebecca would have to sell more than ten thousand to pay off the clavichord.

With lustreless eyes Rodney looked across the table at his wife.

There were lots of women with actual jobs around. Rebecca just didn't happen to be one of them. But whatever a woman did nowadays was called a job. A man sewing together stuffed mice was considered, at best, a poor provider, at worst, a loser. Whereas a woman with a master's and near-Ph.D. in musicology who hand-stitched microwavable, sweet-smelling rodents was now considered (especially by her married female friends) an entrepreneur.

Of course, because of Rebecca's "job," she couldn't take care of the twins full time. They were forced to hire a babysitter, whose weekly salary came to more than what Rebecca brought in by selling the Mice 'n' Warm mice (which was why they could pay only the minimum amount on their credit cards, driving them even further into debt). Rebecca had offered many times to give up the mice and get a job that paid a steady salary. But Rodney, who knew what it was to love a useless thing, always said, "Give it another few years."

Why was what Rodney did a job and what Rebecca did not a job? First of all, Rodney made money. Second, he had to warp his personality to suit his employer. Third, he disliked it. That was a sure sign that it was a job.

"Fifty dollars," he said.

"What?"

"That's the profit on twenty mice. Before taxes."

"Fifty dollars!" cried Tallulah. "That's a lot!"

"It's just one account," Rebecca said.

Rodney felt like asking how many accounts she had total. He felt like asking for a monthly report showing liabilities and receivables. He was sure Rebecca had detailed financial information scrawled on the back of an envelope somewhere. But he didn't say anything, because the girls were there. He just got up and started to clear the table. "I've got to do the dishes," he said, as though it were news.

Rebecca herded the girls into the living room and sat them down before a rented DVD. Typically she used the half hour after dinner to phone her suppliers in China, where it was now tomorrow morning, or to call her mother, a sciatica sufferer. Alone at the kitchen sink, Rodney scraped plates and rinsed kefir-coated glasses. He fed the dragonlike disposal in its lair. A real musician would have had his hands insured. But what would it matter if Rodney stuck his fingers straight down the drain into the churning blades?

The smart thing to do would be to take out insurance first and then stick his hand down the disposal. That way he could pay off the clavichord and sit at it every night playing with his bandaged stump.

Maybe if he'd stayed in Berlin, if he'd gone to the Royal Academy, if he hadn't got married and had kids, maybe Rodney would still be playing music. He might be an internationally known performer, like Menno van Delft or Pierre Goy.

Opening the dishwasher, Rodney saw that it was full of standing water. The outflow tube had been improperly installed; the landlord had promised to fix it but never did. Rodney stared at the rust-colored tide for a while, as though he were a plumber and knew what to do, but in the end he filled the soap container, shut the door, and turned the dishwasher on.

The living room was empty by the time he came out. The DVD control screen played on the television, the loop of theme music repeating itself over and over. Rodney switched it off. He went down the hallway toward the bedrooms. The water was running in the bathtub and he could hear Rebecca's voice coaxing the twins in. He listened for his daughters' voices. This was the new music and he wanted to hear it, just for a minute, but the water was too loud.

On nights when Rebecca gave the girls a bath, it fell to Rodney to read them their bedtime story. He was on his way down the hallway to their room when he reached Rebecca's office. And here he did something he didn't normally do: he stopped. In general, when passing by Rebecca's office, Rodney made a habit of staring at the floor. It was better for his emotional equilibrium to let whatever went on in there go on without his seeing it. But tonight he turned and stared at the door. And then, raising his uninsured right hand, he pushed the door open.

From the back wall, massing around the long worktables and bumping up against the sewing machine, a huge raft of fabric bolts in pastel hues was making its way downstream across the floor. The logjam carried with it ribbon spools, leaking bags of perfumed pellets, stickpins, buttons. Balancing on the logs, some with the jaunty stance of lumberjacks, others terrified and clingy like flood victims, the four varieties of Mice 'n' Warm mice rode toward the falls of the marketplace.

Rodney stared at their little faces looking up with pitiful appeal or savoir-faire. He stared for as long as he could bear it, which was about ten seconds. Then he turned and walked in hard shoes back down the hallway. He passed the bathroom without stopping to listen for Immy and Lula's voices and he continued into the music room, where he shut the door behind him. After seating himself at the clavichord, he took a deep breath and began to play one part of a keyboard duet in E-flat by Müthel.

It was a difficult piece. Johann Gottfried Müthel, Bach's last pupil, was a difficult composer. He'd studied with Bach for only three months. And then he'd gone off to Riga to disappear into the Baltic twilight of his genius. Hardly anybody knew who Müthel was anymore. Except for clavichordists. For clavichordists, playing Müthel was a supreme achievement.

Rodney got off to a good start.

Ten minutes into the duet, Rebecca stuck her head in the door.

"The girls are ready for their story," she said.

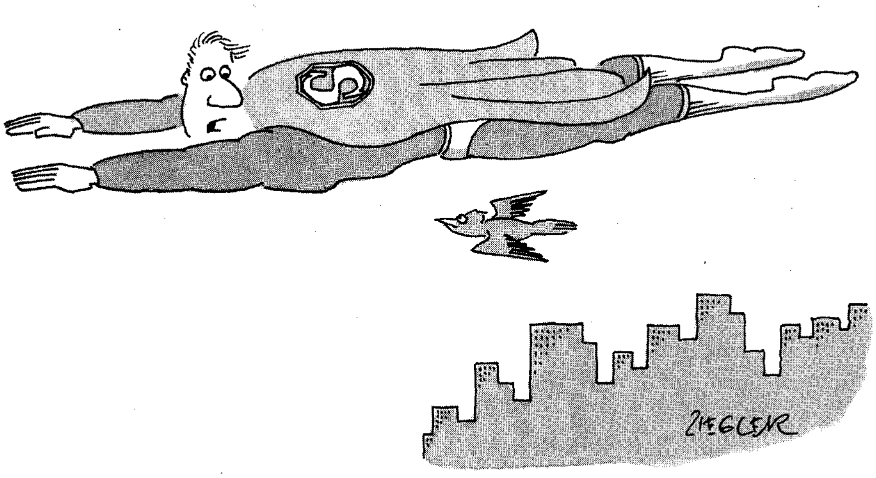
Rodney kept playing.

Rebecca said it louder and Rodney stopped.

"You do it," he said.

"I have to make some calls."

With his right hand, Rodney played an E-flat scale. "I'm practicing," he said. He stared at his hand, as though he were a student learning to play scales for the first time, and he didn't stop staring until Rebecca had withdrawn her head from



"I appreciate the offer, but I'll let you know if and when I need a combat escort."

the doorway. Then Rodney got up and shut the door semi-violently. He came back to the clavichord and started the piece from the beginning.

Müthel hadn't written much. He composed only when the spirit moved him. That was like Rodney. Rodney played only when the spirit moved him.

It moved him now, tonight. For the next two hours, Rodney played the Müthel piece over and over.

He was playing well, with a lot of feeling. But he was also making mistakes. He soldiered on. Then, to make himself feel better, he finished off with Bach's French Suite in D minor, a piece he'd been playing for years and knew by heart.

Before long he was flushed and sweating. It felt good to play with such concentration and vigor again, and when he finally stopped, with the bell-like notes still ringing in his ears and off the low ceiling of the room, Rodney lowered his head and closed his eyes. He was remembering that month and a half, at twenty-six, when he'd played ecstatically and invisibly in empty West German concert halls. Behind him on the desk the phone rang, and Rodney swivelled and picked it up.

"Hello?"

"Good evening, am I speaking with Rodney Webber?"

Rodney realized his mistake. But he said, "This is he."

"My name is James Norris and I'm with Reeves Collection. I know you're familiar with our organization."

If you hung up, they called again. If you changed your phone number, they got the new one. The only hope was to make a deal, to stall, to make promises and buy some time.

"I'm afraid I'm well acquainted with your organization." Rodney was trying for the right tone, light but not insouciant or disrespectful.

"Formerly I believe you've been dealing with Ms. Darlene Jackson. She's been the person assigned to your case. Up until now. Now I'm in charge and I hope we can work something out."

"I hope so, too," said Rodney.

"Mr. Webber, I come in when things get complicated and I try to make them simple. Ms. Jackson offered you various payment plans, I see."

"I sent a thousand dollars in December."

"Yes, you did. And that was a start. But, according to our records, you had agreed to send two thousand."

"I couldn't get that much. It was Christmas."

"Mr. Webber, let's keep things simple. You stopped meeting your payments to our client, the Early Music Store, over a year ago. So Christmas doesn't really have a whole lot to do with it, does it?"

Rodney hadn't enjoyed his conversations with Darlene. But now he saw that Darlene had been reasonable, pliable, in a way that this guy James wasn't. There was a quality in James's voice that wasn't so much menacing as obdurate: a stone wall of a voice.

"Your account is in arrears over payments for a musical instrument, is that right? What kind of instrument is it?"

"A clavichord."

"I'm not familiar with that instrument."

"I wouldn't expect you to be."

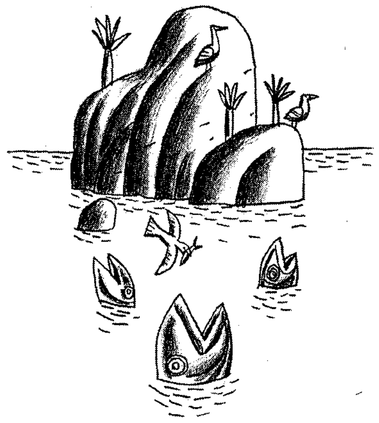
The man chuckled, taking no offense.

"Lucky for me, that's not my job, knowing about ancient instruments."

"A clavichord is a precursor to the piano," Rodney said. "Except it's played by tangents instead of hammers. My clavichord—"

"You see that right there, Mr. Webber? That's incorrect. It's not yours. The instrument still belongs to the Early Music Store, out of Edinburgh. You only have it on loan from them. Until you pay off that loan."

"I thought you might like to know the provenance," said Rodney. How had his diction got way up here, to these heights? Nothing complex: he just wanted to put James Norris of Reeves Collection in his place. Next Rodney heard himself say, "It's a copy, by Verwolf, of a style of clavichord made by a man named Bodechtel in 1790."



James said, "Let me get to my point."

But Rodney didn't let him. "This is what I do," Rodney said, and his voice sounded tight and strained, overtuned. "This is what I do. I'm a clavichordist. I need the instrument to make my living. If you take it back, I'll never be able to pay you back. Or pay the Early Music Store."

"You can keep your clavichord. I'd be happy to let you keep it. All you have to do is pay for it, in full, by 5 P.M. tomorrow, with a certified check or wire transfer from your bank, and you can go on playing your clavichord for as long as you like."

Rodney's laugh was bitter. "Obviously I can't do that."

"Then by 5 P.M. tomorrow we're going to unfortunately have to come out and repossess the instrument."

"I can't get that much by tomorrow."

"This is the end of the line, Rodney."

"There's got to be some way—"

"Only one way, Rodney. Payment in full."

Clumsily, furiously, his hand like a brick trying to throw a brick, Rodney slammed down the phone.

For a moment he didn't move. Then he swivelled back around and placed his hands on the clavichord.

He might have been feeling for a heartbeat. He ran his fingers over the gold ornamentation and the tops of the frigid keys. It wasn't the most beautiful or distinguished clavichord he'd ever played. It couldn't compare to the Hass, but it was his, or it had been, and it was lovely and rapturous-sounding enough. Rodney would never have got it if Rebecca hadn't sent him to Edinburgh. He would never have known how deeply depressed he'd been or how happy the clavichord, for a time, would make him.

His right hand was playing the Müthel again.

Rodney knew he'd never been a first-rate musicologist. At best, he was a mediocre, if sincere, performer. With fifteen minutes' practice in the morning and fifteen in the evening, he wasn't going to get any better.

There'd always been something a little pathetic about being a clavichordist.

Rodney knew that. The Müthel he was playing, however, mistakes and all, still seemed beautiful, maybe more so for its obsolescence. He played for another minute. Then he placed his hands on the warm wood of the clavichord and, leaning forward, stared at the painted garden inside the lid.

It was after ten when he came out of the music room. The apartment was quiet and dark. Entering the bedroom, Rodney didn't turn on the light, so as not to wake up Rebecca. He undressed in the dark, feeling in the closet for a hanger.

In his underwear he shuffled to his side of the bed and crawled in. On one elbow he leaned over to see if Rebecca was awake. But then he realized that her side of the bed was empty. She was still in her office, working.

Rodney collapsed onto his back. He lay immobile. There was a pillow underneath him, in the wrong spot, but he didn't have the energy to roll over and tug it out.

His situation wasn't really so different from anybody else's. He'd only got to the end of the road a little earlier. But it was the same for the rock stars and for the jazz musicians, for the novelists and the poets (definitely for the poets); it was the same for the business executives, the biologists, the computer programmers, the accountants, the flower arrangers. Artist or non-artist, academic or non-academic, Menno van Delft or Rodney Webber, even for Darlene and James of the Reeves Collection Agency: it didn't matter. No one knew what the original music sounded like. You had to make an educated guess and do the best you could. For whatever you played there was no indisputable tuning or handwritten schematic, and the visa you needed in order to see the Master's keyboard was always denied. Sometimes you thought you heard the music, especially when you were young, and then you spent the rest of your life trying to reproduce the sound.

Everybody's life was early music.

He was still awake a half hour later, when Rebecca came in.

"Can I turn on the light?" she asked.

"No," said Rodney.

She paused and said, "You practiced a long time."

"Practice makes perfect."

"Who called? Someone called."

Rodney said nothing.

"You didn't answer, did you? They've been calling later and later."

"I was practicing. I didn't answer."

Rebecca sat on the edge of the bed. She tossed something in Rodney's direction. He picked it up and squinted at it. The beret, the cleft palate. Boho Mouse.

"I'm going to quit," Rebecca said.

"What?"

"The mice. I'm giving up." She stood and began to undress, dropping clothes on the floor. "I should have finished my dissertation. I could have been a musicology professor. Now all I am is Mommy. Mommy, Mommy, Mommy. A mommy who makes stuffed animals." She went into the bathroom. Rodney heard her brushing her teeth, washing her face. She came out again and got into bed.

After a long silence, Rodney said, "You can't give up."

"Why not? You've always wanted me to."

"I changed my mind."

"Why?"

Rodney swallowed. "These mice are our only hope."

"You know what I did tonight?" Rebecca said. "First I took the mouse out of the trash. Then I unpicked the stitches and took out the musk pellets. And then I filled it with cinnamon pellets and stitched it back up. That's how I spent my evening."

Rodney held the mouse to his nose.

"Smells good," he said. "These mice are destined for greatness. You're going to make us a million bucks."

"If I make a million bucks," Rebecca said, "I'll pay off your clavichord."

"Deal," said Rodney.

"And you can quit your job and get back to playing music full time." She rolled over and kissed his cheek, then rolled back and adjusted her pillows and blankets.

Rodney kept the stuffed mouse against his nose, inhaling its spicy aroma. He kept smelling the mouse even after Rebecca had fallen asleep. If the microwave had been nearby, Rodney would have fired up Boho Mouse to reconstitute its bouquet. But the microwave was down the hall, in the shabby kitchen, and so he just lay there, smelling the mouse, which by now was cold and almost scentless. ◆

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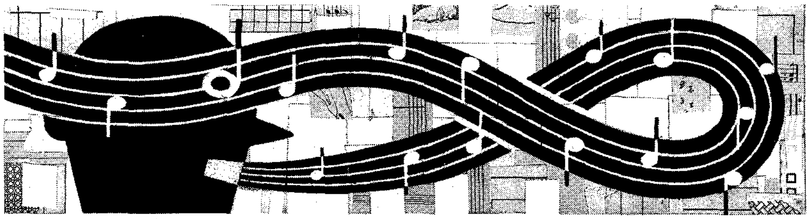


ARNOLD ROTH

A CRITIC AT LARGE

GETTING IN

The social logic of Ivy League admissions.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

I applied to college one evening, after dinner, in the fall of my senior year in high school. College applicants in Ontario, in those days, were given a single sheet of paper which listed all the universities in the province. It was my job to rank them in order of preference. Then I had to mail the sheet of paper to a central college-admissions office. The whole process probably took ten minutes. My school sent in my grades separately. I vaguely remember filling out a supplementary two-page form listing my interests and activities. There were no S.A.T. scores to worry about, because in Canada we didn't have to take the S.A.T.s. I don't know whether anyone wrote me a recommendation. I certainly never asked anyone to. Why would I? It wasn't as if I were applying to a private club.

I put the University of Toronto first on my list, the University of Western Ontario second, and Queen's University third. I was working off a set of brochures that I'd sent away for. My parents' contribution consisted of my father's agreeing to drive me one afternoon to the University of Toronto campus, where we visited the residential college I was most interested in. I walked around. My father poked his head into the admissions office, chatted with the admissions director, and—I imagine—either said a few short words about the talents of his son or (knowing my father) remarked on the loveliness of the delphiniums in the college flower beds. Then we had ice cream. I got in.

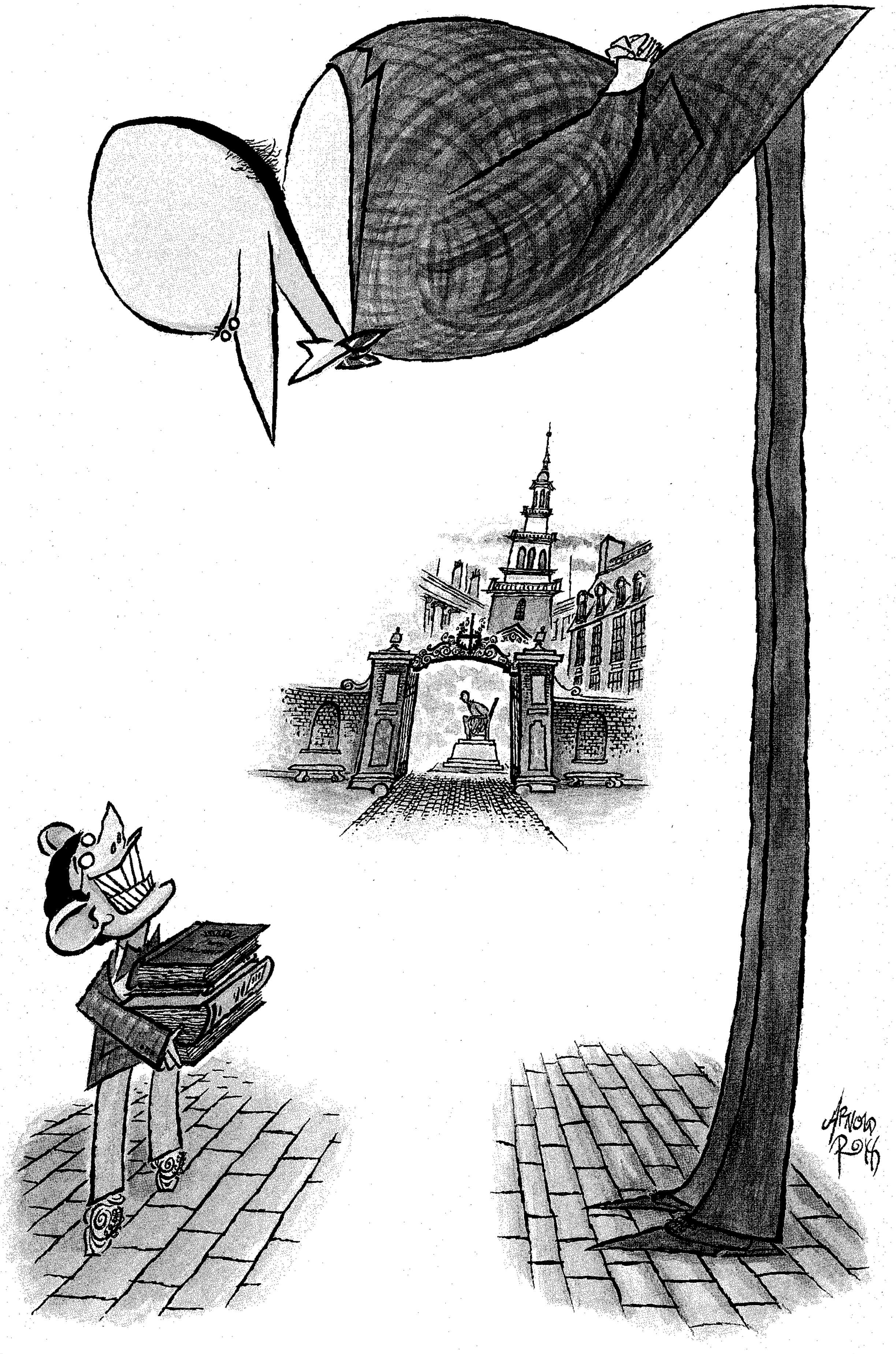
Am I a better or more successful person for having been accepted at the University of Toronto, as opposed to my second or third choice? It strikes me as a curious question. In Ontario, there wasn't a strict hierarchy of colleges. There were several good ones and several better ones and a number of programs—like computer science at the University of Waterloo—that were world-class. But since all colleges were part of the same public system and tuition everywhere was the same (about a thousand dollars a year, in those days), and a B average in high school pretty much guaranteed you a spot in college, there wasn't a sense that anything great was at stake in the choice of which college we attended. The issue was *whether* we attended college, and—most important—how seriously we took the experience once we got there. I thought everyone felt this way. You can imagine my confusion, then, when I first met someone who had gone to Harvard.

There was, first of all, that strange initial reluctance to talk about the matter of college at all—a glance downward, a shuffling of the feet, a mumbled mention of Cambridge. "Did you go to Harvard?" I would ask. I had just moved to the United States. I didn't know the rules. An uncomfortable nod would follow. Don't define me by my school, they seemed to be saying, which implied that their school actually could define them. And, of course, it did. Wherever there was one Harvard graduate, another lurked not far behind, ready to swap tales of late nights at the Hasty Pudding, or recount the intricacies of the college-application essay, or wonder out loud about the whereabouts of Prince So-and-So, who lived down the hall and whose family had a place in the South of France that you would *not* believe. In the novels they were writing, the precocious and sensitive protagonist always went to Harvard; if he was troubled, he dropped out of Harvard; in the end, he returned to Harvard to complete his senior thesis. Once, I attended a wedding of a Harvard alum in his fifties, at which the best man spoke of his college days with the groom as if neither could have accomplished anything of greater importance in the intervening thirty years. By the end, I half expected him to take off his shirt and proudly display the large crimson "H" tattooed on his chest. What is this "Harvard" of which you Americans speak so reverently?

In 1905, Harvard College adopted the College Entrance Examination Board tests as the principal basis for admission, which meant that virtually any academically gifted high-school senior who could afford a private college had a straightforward shot at attending. By 1908, the freshman class was seven per cent Jewish, nine per cent Catholic, and forty-five per cent from public schools, an astonishing transformation for a school that historically had been the preserve of the New England boarding-school complex known in the admissions world as St. Grottlesex.

As the sociologist Jerome Karabel writes in "The Chosen" (Houghton Mifflin; $28), his remarkable history of the admissions process at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, that meritocratic spirit soon led to a crisis. The enrollment of Jews began to rise dramatically. By 1922, they made up more than a fifth of Harvard's freshman class. The administration and alumni were up in arms. Jews were thought to be sickly and grasping, grade-grubbing and insular. They displaced the sons of wealthy Wasp alumni, which did not bode well for fund-raising. A. Lawrence Lowell, Harvard's president in the nineteen-twenties, stated flatly that too many Jews would destroy the school: "The summer hotel that is ruined by admitting Jews meets its fate . . . because they drive away the Gentiles, and then after the Gentiles have left, they leave also."

The difficult part, however, was com-



In the élite-education business, you are whom you admit, and when Harvard changed whom it admitted, it changed Harvard.

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ing up with a way of keeping Jews out, because as a group they were academically superior to everyone else. Lowell's first idea—a quota limiting Jews to fifteen per cent of the student body—was roundly criticized. Lowell tried restricting the number of scholarships given to Jewish students, and made an effort to bring in students from public schools in the West, where there were fewer Jews. Neither strategy worked. Finally, Lowell—and his counterparts at Yale and Princeton—realized that if a definition of merit based on academic prowess was leading to the wrong kind of student, the solution was to change the definition of merit. Karabel argues that it was at this moment that the history and nature of the Ivy League took a significant turn.

The admissions office at Harvard became much more interested in the details of an applicant's personal life. Lowell told his admissions officers to elicit information about the "character" of candidates from "persons who know the applicants well," and so the letter of reference became mandatory. Harvard started asking applicants to provide a photograph. Candidates had to write personal essays, demonstrating their aptitude for leadership, and list their extracurricular activities. "Starting in the fall of 1922," Karabel writes, "applicants were required to answer questions on 'Race and Color,' 'Religious Preference,' 'Maiden Name of Mother,' 'Birthplace of Father,' and 'What change, if any, has been made since birth in your own name or that of your father? (Explain fully).' "

At Princeton, emissaries were sent to the major boarding schools, with instructions to rate potential candidates on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 was "very desirable and apparently exceptional material from every point of view" and 4 was "undesirable from the point of view of character, and, therefore, to be excluded no matter what the results of the entrance examinations might be." The personal interview became a key component of admissions in order, Karabel writes, "to ensure that 'undesirables' were identified and to assess important but subtle indicators of background and breeding such as speech, dress, deportment and physical appearance." By 1933, the end of Lowell's term, the percentage of Jews at Harvard was back down to fifteen per cent.

If this new admissions system seems familiar, that's because it is essentially the same system that the Ivy League uses to this day. According to Karabel, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton didn't abandon the elevation of character once the Jewish crisis passed. They institutionalized it.

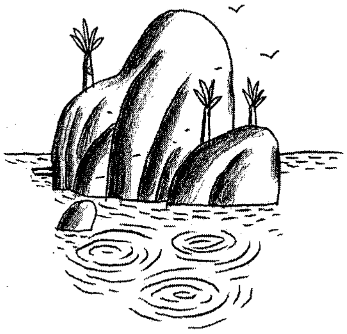
Starting in 1953, Arthur Howe, Jr., spent a decade as the chair of admissions at Yale, and Karabel describes what happened under his guidance:

> The admissions committee viewed evidence of "manliness" with particular enthusiasm. One boy gained admission despite an academic prediction of 70 because "there was apparently something manly and distinctive about him that had won over both his alumni and staff interviewers." Another candidate, admitted despite his schoolwork being "mediocre in comparison with many others," was accepted over an applicant with a much better record and higher exam scores because, as Howe put it, "we just thought he was more of a guy." So preoccupied was Yale with the appearance of its students that the form used by alumni interviewers actually had a physical characteristics checklist through 1965. Each year, Yale carefully measured the height of entering freshmen, noting with pride the proportion of the class at six feet or more.

At Harvard, the key figure in that same period was Wilbur Bender, who, as the dean of admissions, had a preference for "the boy with some athletic interests and abilities, the boy with physical vigor and coordination and grace." Bender, Karabel tells us, believed that if Harvard continued to suffer on the football field it would contribute to the school's reputation as a place with "no college spirit, few good fellows, and no vigorous, healthy social life," not to mention a "surfeit of 'pansies,' 'decadent esthetes' and 'precious sophisticates.' " Bender concentrated on improving Harvard's techniques for evaluating "intangibles" and, in particular, its "ability to detect homosexual tendencies and serious psychiatric problems."

By the nineteen-sixties, Harvard's admissions system had evolved into a series of complex algorithms. The school began by lumping all applicants into one of twenty-two dockets, according to their geographical origin. (There was one docket for Exeter and Andover, another for the eight Rocky Mountain states.) Information from interviews, references, and student essays was then used to grade each applicant on a scale of 1 to 6, along four dimensions: personal, academic, extracurricular, and athletic. Competition, critically, was within each docket, not between dockets, so there was no way for, say, the graduates of Bronx Science and Stuyvesant to shut out the graduates of Andover and Exeter. More important, academic achievement was just one of four dimensions, further diluting the value of pure intellectual accomplishment. Athletic ability, rather than falling under "extracurriculars," got a category all to itself, which explains why, even now, recruited athletes have an acceptance rate to the Ivies at well over twice the rate of other students, despite S.A.T. scores that are on average more than a hundred points lower. And the most important category? That mysterious index of "personal" qualities. According to Harvard's own analysis, the personal rating was a better predictor of admission than the academic rating. Those with a rank of 4 or worse on the personal scale had, in the nineteen-sixties, a rejection rate of ninety-eight per cent. Those with a personal rating of 1 had a rejection rate of 2.5 per cent. When the Office of Civil Rights at the federal education department investigated Harvard in the nineteen-eighties, they found handwritten notes scribbled in the margins of various candidates' files. "This young woman could be one of the brightest applicants in the pool but there are several references to shyness," read one. Another comment reads, "Seems a tad frothy." One application—and at this point you can almost hear it going to the bottom of the pile—was notated, "Short with big ears."

Social scientists distinguish between what are known as treatment effects and selection effects. The Marine Corps, for instance, is largely a treatment-effect institution. It doesn't have an enormous admissions office grading applicants along four separate dimensions of toughness and intelligence. It's confident that the experience of undergoing Marine Corps basic training will turn you into a formidable soldier. A modelling agency, by contrast, is a selection-effect institution. You don't become beautiful by signing up with an agency. You get signed up by an agency because you're beautiful.



At the heart of the American obsession with the Ivy League is the belief that schools like Harvard provide the social and intellectual equivalent of Marine Corps basic training—that being taught by all those brilliant professors and meeting all those other motivated students and getting a degree with that powerful name on it will confer advantages that no local state university can provide. Fuelling the treatment-effect idea are studies showing that if you take two students with the same S.A.T. scores and grades, one of whom goes to a school like Harvard and one of whom goes to a less selective college, the Ivy Leaguer will make far more money ten or twenty years down the road.

The extraordinary emphasis the Ivy League places on admissions policies, though, makes it seem more like a modelling agency than like the Marine Corps, and, sure enough, the studies based on those two apparently equivalent students turn out to be flawed. How do we know that two students who have the same S.A.T. scores and grades really are equivalent? It's quite possible that the student who goes to Harvard is more ambitious and energetic and personable than the student who wasn't let in, and that those same intangibles are what account for his better career success. To assess the effect of the Ivies, it makes more sense to compare the student who got into a top school with the student who got into that same school but chose to go to a less selective one. Three years ago, the economists Alan Krueger and Stacy Dale published just such a study. And they found that when you compare apples and apples the income bonus from selective schools disappears.

"As a hypothetical example, take the University of Pennsylvania and Penn State, which are two schools a lot of students choose between," Krueger said. "One is Ivy, one is a state school. Penn is much more highly selective. If you compare the students who go to those two schools, the ones who go to Penn have higher incomes. But let's look at those who got into both types of schools, some of whom chose Penn and some of whom

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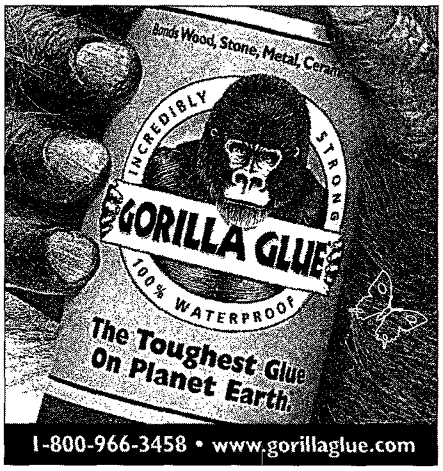

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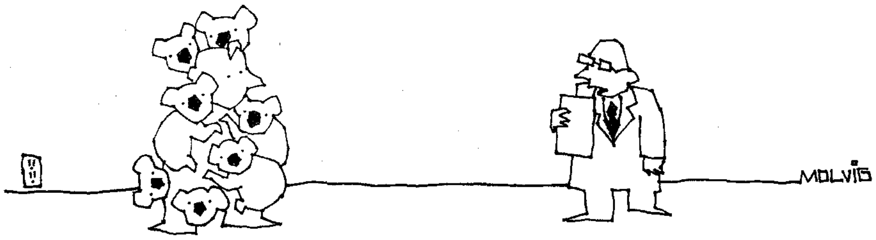

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chose Penn State. Within that set it doesn't seem to matter whether you go to the more selective school. Now, you would think that the more ambitious student is the one who would choose to go to Penn, and the ones choosing to go to Penn State might be a little less confident in their abilities or have a little lower family income, and both of those factors would point to people doing worse later on. But they don't."

Krueger says that there is one exception to this. Students from the very lowest economic strata do seem to benefit from going to an Ivy. For most students, though, the general rule seems to be that if you are a hardworking and intelligent person you'll end up doing well regardless of where you went to school. You'll make good contacts at Penn. But Penn State is big enough and diverse enough that you can make good contacts there, too. Having Penn on your résumé opens doors. But if you were good enough to get into Penn you're good enough that those doors will open for you anyway. "I can see why families are really concerned about this," Krueger went on. "The average graduate from a top school is making nearly a hundred and twenty thousand dollars a year, the average graduate from a moderately selective school is making ninety thousand dollars. That's an enormous difference, and I can see why parents would fight to get their kids into the better school. But I think they are just assigning to the school a lot of what the student is bringing with him to the school."

Bender was succeeded as the dean of admissions at Harvard by Fred Glimp, who, Karabel tells us, had a particular concern with academic underperformers. "Any class, no matter how able, will always have a bottom quarter," Glimp once wrote. "What are the effects of the psychology of feeling average, even in a very able group? Are there identifiable types with the psychological or what-not tolerance to be 'happy' or to make the most of education while in the bottom quarter?" Glimp thought it was critical that the students who populated the lower rungs of every Harvard class weren't so driven and ambitious that they would be disturbed by their status. "Thus the renowned (some would say notorious) Harvard admission practice known as the 'happy-bottom-quarter' policy was born," Karabel writes.

It's unclear whether or not Glimp found any students who fit that particular description. (He wondered, in a marvellously honest moment, whether the answer was "Harvard sons.") But Glimp had the realism of the modelling scout. Glimp believed implicitly what Krueger and Dale later confirmed: that the character and performance of an academic class is determined, to a significant extent, at the point of admission; that if you want to graduate winners you have to admit winners; that if you want the bottom quarter of your class to succeed you have to find people capable of succeeding in the bottom quarter. Karabel is quite right, then, to see the events of the nineteen-twenties as the defining moment of the modern Ivy League. You are whom you admit in the élite-education business, and when Harvard changed whom it admitted, it changed Harvard. Was that change for the better or for the worse?

In the wake of the Jewish crisis, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton chose to adopt what might be called the "best graduates" approach to admissions. France's École Normale Supérieure, Japan's University of Tokyo, and most of the world's other élite schools define their task as looking for the best students—that is, the applicants who will have the greatest academic success during their time in college. The Ivy League schools justified their emphasis on character and personality, however, by arguing that they were searching for the students who would have the greatest success *after* college. They were looking for leaders, and leadership, the officials of the Ivy League believed, was not a simple matter of academic brilliance. "Should our goal be to select a student body with the highest possible proportions of high-ranking students, or should it be to select, within a reasonably high range of academic ability, a student body with a certain variety of talents, qualities, attitudes, and backgrounds?" Wilbur Bender asked. To him, the answer was obvious. If you let in only the brilliant, then you produced bookworms and bench scientists: you ended up as socially irrelevant as the University of Chicago (an institution Harvard officials looked upon and shuddered). "Above a reasonably good level of mental ability, above that indicated by a 550-600 level of S.A.T. score," Bender went on, "the only thing that matters in terms of future impact on, or contribution to, society is the degree of personal inner force an individual has."

It's easy to find fault with the best-graduates approach. We tend to think that intellectual achievement is the fairest and highest standard of merit. The Ivy League process, quite apart from its dubious origins, seems subjective and opaque. Why should personality and athletic ability matter so much? The notion that "the ability to throw, kick, or hit a ball is a legitimate criterion in determining who should be admitted to our greatest research universities," Karabel writes, is "a proposition that would be considered laughable in most of the world's countries." At the same time that Harvard was constructing its byzantine admissions system, Hunter College Elementary School, in New York, required simply that applicants take an exam, and if they scored in the top fifty they got in. It's hard to imagine a more objective and transparent procedure.

But what did Hunter achieve with that best-students model? In the nineteen-eighties, a handful of educational researchers surveyed the students who attended the elementary school between 1948 and 1960. This was a group with an average I.Q. of 157—three and a half standard deviations above the mean—who had been given what, by any measure, was one of the finest classroom experiences in the world. As graduates, though, they weren't nearly as distinguished as they were expected to be. "Although most of our study participants are successful and fairly content with their lives and accomplishments," the authors conclude, "there are no superstars . . . and only one or two familiar names." The researchers spend a great deal of time trying to figure out why Hunter graduates are so disappointing, and end up sounding very much like Wilbur Bender. Being a smart child isn't a terribly good predictor of success in later life, they conclude. "Non-intellective" factors—like motivation and social skills—probably matter more. Perhaps, the study suggests, "after noting the sacrifices involved in trying for national or world-class leadership in a field, H.C.E.S. graduates decided that the intelligent thing to do was to choose relatively happy and successful lives." It is a wonderful thing, of course, for a school to turn out lots of relatively happy and successful graduates. But Harvard didn't want lots of relatively happy and successful graduates. It wanted superstars, and Bender and his colleagues recognized that if this is your goal a best-students model isn't enough.

Most élite law schools, to cite another example, follow a best-students model. That's why they rely so heavily on the L.S.A.T. Yet there's no reason to believe that a person's L.S.A.T. scores have much relation to how good a lawyer he will be. In a recent research project funded by the Law School Admission Council, the Berkeley researchers Sheldon Zedeck and Marjorie Shultz identified twenty-six "competencies" that they think effective lawyering demands—among them practical judgment, passion and engagement, legal-research skills, questioning and interviewing skills, negotiation skills, stress management, and so on—and the L.S.A.T. picks up only a handful of them. A law school that wants to select the best possible lawyers has to use a very different admissions process from a law school that wants to select the best possible law students. And wouldn't we prefer that at least some law schools try to select good lawyers instead of good law students?

This search for good lawyers, furthermore, is necessarily going to be subjective, because things like passion and engagement can't be measured as precisely as academic proficiency. Subjectivity in the admissions process is not just an occasion for discrimination; it is also, in better times, the only means available for giving us the social outcome we want. The first black captain of the Yale football team was a man named Levi Jackson, who graduated in 1950. Jackson was a hugely popular figure on campus. He went on to be a top executive at Ford, and is credited with persuading the company to hire thousands of African-Americans after the 1967 riots. When Jackson was tapped for the exclusive secret society Skull and Bones, he joked, "If my name had been reversed, I never would have made it." He had a point. The strategy of discretion that Yale had once used to exclude Jews was soon being used to include people like Levi Jackson.

In the 2001 book "The Game of Life," James L. Shulman and William Bowen (a former president of Princeton) conducted an enormous statistical analysis on an issue that has become one of the most contentious in admissions: the special preferences given to recruited athletes at selective universities. Athletes, Shulman and Bowen demonstrate, have a large and growing advantage in admission over everyone else. At the same time, they have markedly lower G.P.A.s and S.A.T. scores than their peers. Over the past twenty years, their class rankings have steadily dropped, and they tend to segregate themselves in an "athletic culture" different from the culture of the rest of the college. Shulman and Bowen think the preference given to athletes by the Ivy League is shameful.

Halfway through the book, however, Shulman and Bowen present what they call a "surprising" finding. Male athletes, despite their lower S.A.T. scores and grades, and despite the fact that many of them are members of minorities and come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds than other students, turn out to earn a lot more than their peers. Apparently, athletes are far more likely to go into the high-paying financial-services sector, where they succeed because of their personality and psychological makeup. In what can only be described as a textbook example of bury-

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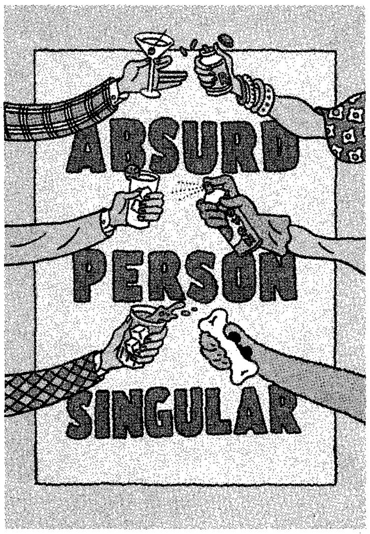

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ing the lead, Bowen and Shulman write:

> One of these characteristics can be thought of as drive—a strong desire to succeed and unswerving determination to reach a goal, whether it be winning the next game or closing a sale. Similarly, athletes tend to be more energetic than the average person, which translates into an ability to work hard over long periods of time—to meet, for example, the workload demands placed on young people by an investment bank in the throes of analyzing a transaction. In addition, athletes are more likely than others to be highly competitive, gregarious and confident of their ability to work well in groups (on teams).

Shulman and Bowen would like to argue that the attitudes of selective colleges toward athletes are a perversion of the ideals of American élite education, but that's because they misrepresent the actual ideals of American élite education. The Ivy League is perfectly happy to accept, among others, the kind of student who makes a lot of money after graduation. As the old saying goes, the definition of a well-rounded Yale graduate is someone who can roll all the way from New Haven to Wall Street.

I once had a conversation with someone who worked for an advertising agency that represented one of the big luxury automobile brands. He said that he was worried that his client's new lower-priced line was being bought disproportionately by black women. He insisted that he did not mean this in a racist way. It was just a fact, he said. Black women would destroy the brand's cachet. It was his job to protect his client from the attentions of the socially undesirable.

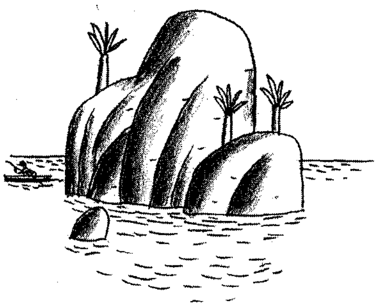
This is, in no small part, what Ivy League admissions directors do. They are in the luxury-brand-management business, and "The Chosen," in the end, is a testament to just how well the brand managers in Cambridge, New Haven, and Princeton have done their job in the past seventy-five years. In the nineteen-twenties, when Harvard tried to figure out how many Jews they had on campus, the admissions office scoured student records and assigned each suspected Jew the designation j1 (for someone who was "conclusively Jewish"), j2 (where the "preponderance of evidence" pointed to Jewishness), or j3 (where Jewishness was a "possibility"). In the branding world, this is called customer segmentation. In the Second World War, as Yale faced plummeting enrollment and revenues, it continued to turn down qualified Jewish applicants. As Karabel writes, "In the language of sociology, Yale judged its symbolic capital to be even more precious than its economic capital." No good brand manager would sacrifice reputation for short-term gain. The admissions directors at Harvard have always, similarly, been diligent about rewarding the children of graduates, or, as they are quaintly called, "legacies." In the 1985-92 period, for instance, Harvard admitted children of alumni at a rate more than twice that of non-athlete, non-legacy applicants, despite the fact that, on virtually every one of the school's magical ratings scales, legacies significantly lagged behind their peers. Karabel calls the practice "unmeritocratic at best and profoundly corrupt at worst," but rewarding customer loyalty is what luxury brands do. Harvard wants good graduates, and part of their definition of a good graduate is someone who is a generous and loyal alumnus. And if you want generous and loyal alumni you have to reward them. Aren't the tremendous resources provided to Harvard by its alumni part of the reason so many people want to go to Harvard in the first place? The endless battle over admissions in the United States proceeds on the assumption that some great moral principle is at stake in the matter of whom schools like Harvard choose to let in—that those who are denied admission by the whims of the admissions office have somehow been harmed. If you are sick and a hospital shuts its doors to you, you are harmed. But a selective school is not a hospital, and those it turns away are not sick. Élite schools, like any luxury brand, are an aesthetic experience—an exquisitely constructed fantasy of what it means to belong to an élite—and they have always been mindful of what must be done to maintain that experience.

In the nineteen-eighties, when Harvard was accused of enforcing a secret quota on Asian admissions, its defense was that once you adjusted for the preferences given to the children of alumni and for the preferences given to athletes, Asians really weren't being discriminated against. But you could sense Harvard's exasperation that the issue was being raised at all. If Harvard had too many Asians, it wouldn't be Harvard, just as Harvard wouldn't be Harvard with too many Jews or pansies or parlor pinks or shy types or short people with big ears. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Truth and Consequences, *by Alison Lurie (Viking; $24.95).* Like Lurie's "The War Between the Tates," this is a comedy of adultery with a comedy of academia thrown in. Alan, a professor of architectural history at a college that sounds like Cornell (where Lurie teaches), married Jane because she reminded him of a classical building—"order, harmony, and tradition"—but, when his life is yanked askew by a back injury, he can't stand her orderliness anymore. Enter a femme fatale, in the form of a visiting fellow—a poet, all Pre-Raphaelite hair and vatic utterance. The inevitable happens, and, thanks to Lurie's psychological acuity, so does much that wasn't inevitable. Jane leaves Alan, but she comes by every day, depositing a microwavable meal, to his fury and his relief. (Otherwise, what would he eat?) Alan is the most likable character, but, as in the best comedies, everyone gets justice, and no one escapes it.

The Year of Magical Thinking, *by Joan Didion (Knopf; $23.95).* In December, 2003, Didion's husband, the writer John Gregory Dunne, died of a heart attack, just after they had returned from the hospital where their only child, Quintana, was lying in a coma. This book is a memoir of Dunne's death, Quintana's illness, and Didion's efforts to make sense of a time when nothing made sense. "She's a pretty cool customer," one hospital worker says of her, and, certainly, coolness was always part of the addictive appeal of Didion's writing. The other part was the dark side of cool, the hyper-nervous awareness of the tendency of things to go bad. In 2004, Didion had her own disasters to deal with, and she did not, she feels, deal with them coolly, or even sanely. This book is about getting a grip and getting on; it's also a tribute to an extraordinary marriage.



Henry Adams and the Making of America, *by Garry Wills (Houghton Mifflin; $30).* According to Wills, the fact that no one these days has much regard for Henry Adams's histories of the Jefferson and Madison Presidencies is "one of the true scandals of American historiography." Wills argues that the work—nine daunting volumes of it—is a masterpiece that has been almost criminally misread by academics swayed by the "cheap pessimism" and "blatant distortions" of "The Education of Henry Adams." Attempting redress, Wills sets Adams's life story and his historical writings against each other, "stereoscopically"—thus producing what might be called the re-education of Henry Adams. Unfortunately, after a few striking chapters portraying Adams's disdain for his Presidential forebears (he wished he could be "less Adamsy"), the book becomes a volume-by-volume gloss that is no great advertisement either for the history's readability or for the distinctiveness of its argument about the emergence of an American national identity.

Made in Detroit, *by Paul Clemens (Doubleday; $23.95).* Detroit's population has halved since the nineteen-fifties, the result both of decline in the auto industry and, starting in the late sixties, of white flight in the wake of race riots. Born in Detroit in the seventies, Clemens grew up in a white enclave, and his memoir lovingly depicts his soft-spoken, gearhead father, who could shift from first to fifth without ever engaging the clutch, and his stalwart mother, who cleaned houses to pay for a private education that would keep her son out of inner-city schools. Embedded in his well-wrought, if conventional, coming-of-age story is an honest and bracing account not only of mutual mistrust across the color divide but also of the peculiar Rust Belt pride that kept whites and blacks locked together, even as the city collapsed around them.

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POP MUSIC

EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES

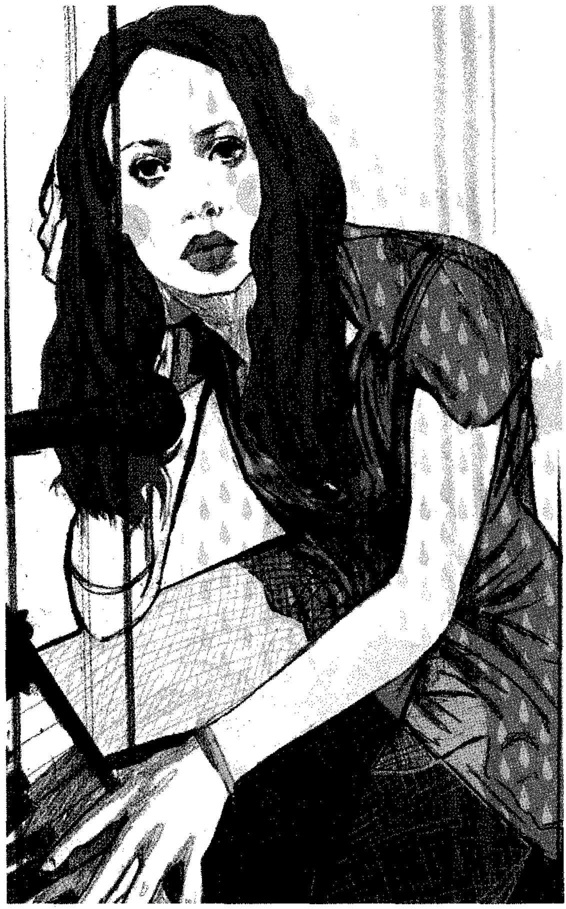
Fiona Apple's new album.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Fiona Apple's public image was minted in 1997, when she appeared in a video for "Criminal," a song from her triple-platinum début album, "Tidal," slinking around miserably in her underwear and looking like an underfed Calvin Klein model. That year, she won an MTV Video Music Award for Best New Artist, but in her acceptance speech she sounded more insulted than grateful: "Everybody out there that's watching, everybody that's watching this world, this world is bullshit and you shouldn't model your life about what you think that we think is cool." Elsewhere, she talked openly about being raped at the age of twelve, and in February, 2000, she broke down onstage at Roseland Ballroom in the middle of a concert. Last winter, when rumors spread that Sony had rejected her long-awaited third album, "Extraordinary Machine," her fans came indignantly to her defense, demanding the album's release on a fan site, freefiona.com.

Sony is releasing the album this week, and, as Apple has made clear in interviews, she, not the label, was responsible for the delay. (Not satisfied with the results of her collaboration with Jon Brion, who produced her second album, known as "When the Pawn"—the actual title is ninety words long—Apple re-recorded most of the songs with Mike Elizondo, a bassist who played on "When the Pawn," and Brian Kehew, a producer.) Apple's insistence on control should not come as a surprise to close listeners of her work. Apple, who is twenty-eight, is as musically sure-footed as she is emotionally labile. "Extraordinary Machine" is the confident extension of a rich and original musical language that she has been carefully fashioning for the past decade.

"Tidal" was uneven. Apple was nineteen when she recorded it and had a teen-ager's sense of drama, which sees the world ending whenever a relationship does; she did not yet know that "invade your demeanor" is a phrase that God never intended anyone to say out loud. But she had a lusciously capable voice, a unique sense of melody, and a percussive style at the piano—her main accompaniment. As a child, she taught herself to play piano chords by buying sheet music and translating guitar tablature into notes, a backward method with a happy result: she plays lots of satisfying clumps with her left hand and has little use for the twee right-hand flourishes that can destroy a good standard in a bad cabaret. The songs on "Tidal" followed a twisty logic that suggested hours spent alone in a room; the verses lurched through time signatures and keys, and Apple's robust contralto, though sometimes heavy on vibrato, gave her line readings a pleasingly sinister feel. Even when she was lovelorn—as she was in nearly every song—Apple sounded fierce, as though she had one hand on her sword. And, when she reached to sing a note in her upper range, the clarity and force of her voice were bracing.



Apple is emotionally labile but musically sure-footed.

RACHEL DOMM

"When the Pawn," which was released in 1999, was better. Apple had lost the stagy quaver in her voice and had become adept at wringing more than just fear and anger from her favorite trope: a relationship with a man that goes terribly wrong. Brion used obscure instruments like the Chamberlin—a wheezy keyboard that plays tape loops—along with an array of strings and woodwinds, helping to give "When the Pawn" a sound that was both timeless and appealingly odd. Apple seemed happier, too; she is pictured on the album cover smiling broadly, and in the video for the song "Paper Bag" (a jaunty, bittersweet love song in which she makes the recurring phrase "hunger hurts" sound almost lighthearted), directed by her boyfriend at the time, Paul Thomas Anderson, she wears a red silk dress and looks calmly into the camera while executing a long, elegant ballroom-dance routine. Predictably, MTV preferred Apple crouching and semi-naked, and didn't know what to make of her prolix, sophisticated songs, which owed more to Kurt Weill and Tori Amos than to anyone then in heavy rotation. "When the Pawn" sold a third as many copies as "Tidal" had.

Apple's decision to re-record her third album was hardly remarkable; artists tinker with their tracks all the time. But the rough mixes that she produced with Brion were leaked anonymously on the Internet, where they were widely circulated, putting fans in the unusual situation of being able to choose between two versions of the same record. (In its published form, "Extraordinary Machine" features two recordings from Brion's original production, nine re-recordings, and one new song, "Parting Gift.") In fact, the differences matter less than you might think. The songs from Apple's collaboration with Brion sound as though they were being played on a calliope inside a merry-go-round. Elizondo and Kehew's arrangements are more bass-heavy and less whimsical. But, whichever version you end up preferring, Apple is in charge: the songs follow her around like a boat on a towline.

The album begins with the title track (produced by Brion), on which Apple sings softly, accompanied only by a pizzicato figure for strings, woodwinds, and marimba, and a lone bell, which she plays herself. The effect is almost dainty, the musical equivalent of a curtsy. As the music tiptoes around her, Apple delivers a rebuke: "I certainly haven't been shopping for any new shoes, and I certainly haven't been spreading myself around." The catchy chorus is a warning to those (her fans included) who underestimate her resilience: "Be kind to me, or treat me mean. / I'll make the most of it, I'm an extraordinary machine." As she completes the phrase, her voice leaps girlishly into her upper register, and it's as if she were gripping your arm so firmly that you could feel her nails dig into your skin.

With the exception of a few lyrics, like "A voice once stentorian is now again meek and muffled," Apple is no longer interested in pseudo-literary language. She's secure enough to entrust her feelings to the more incisive charms of the vernacular: "The sign said stop, but we went on whole-hearted. / It ended bad, but I love where we started" ("Parting Gift"). Her melodies are as varied as ever, switching on a dime from long and intricate to short and repetitive. Her themes haven't really changed—the pronoun "he" is rarely followed by anything sanguine—but Apple is no longer simply at the mercy of her emotions. The chorus of "O' Sailor," for example, recalls "I Know," from "When the Pawn"; both are painfully gorgeous songs about love gone wrong, but in the new song Apple makes wisecracks about her own reputation—"I have too been playing with fifty-two cards"—that would have been hard to imagine before.

The less Apple wails and gnashes, the more believable it is when she does. "Get Him Back," the album's second track, sounds like a distillation of fifteen early Apple songs. The piano rumbles, and she starts in on someone who's betrayed her: "Wait until I get him back, he won't have a back to scratch." But for most of the song she compresses her wrath into just two chords. Although she still wants the men who have jilted her to suffer, now she sends them to their fates with the aplomb of a capo raising his pinkie to order a hit.

"Parting Gift," which Apple recorded in a single take at the piano, encapsulates her new strength. When she belts out the bitter chorus—"O you silly stupid pastime of mine / you were always good for a rhyme"—she hits the piano so hard that you don't miss the lack of a backing band. The song is emotionally complex. Apple acknowledges that the relationship started off well—"I opened my eyes once while you were kissing me once, more than once"—and, uncharacteristically, takes some responsibility for its unhappy end: "It is my fault, you see, you never learned that much from me."

The album contains many moments both of lushness and of restraint—it calls to mind Elvis Costello's 1982 "Imperial Bedroom," a record that displays a similar balance of attacks and retreats. "Extraordinary Machine" is just fifty minutes, and it feels short; you want to replay it immediately. It's the kind of album that makes an artist's previous work sound better, a record that makes converts out of doubters. Apple's fans sent Sony hundreds of foam apples as part of the campaign to win the album's release. It seems like going to a lot of trouble, but "Extraordinary Machine" repays that kind of love. ♦

From the Christian Science Monitor.

Police on Tuesday violently dispersed a small demonstration estimated between 100 to 300 protesters, in support of Ganji outside Tehran University. According to eyewitness reports, police beat a crowd of women with batons and a local Reuters reporter.

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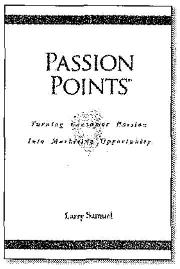

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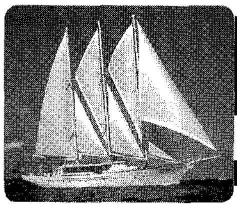

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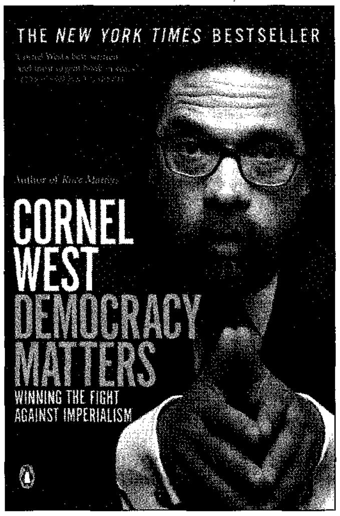
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ON PHOTOGRAPHY

SEEING THINGS

Spirit photography at the Met.

BY VINCE ALETTI

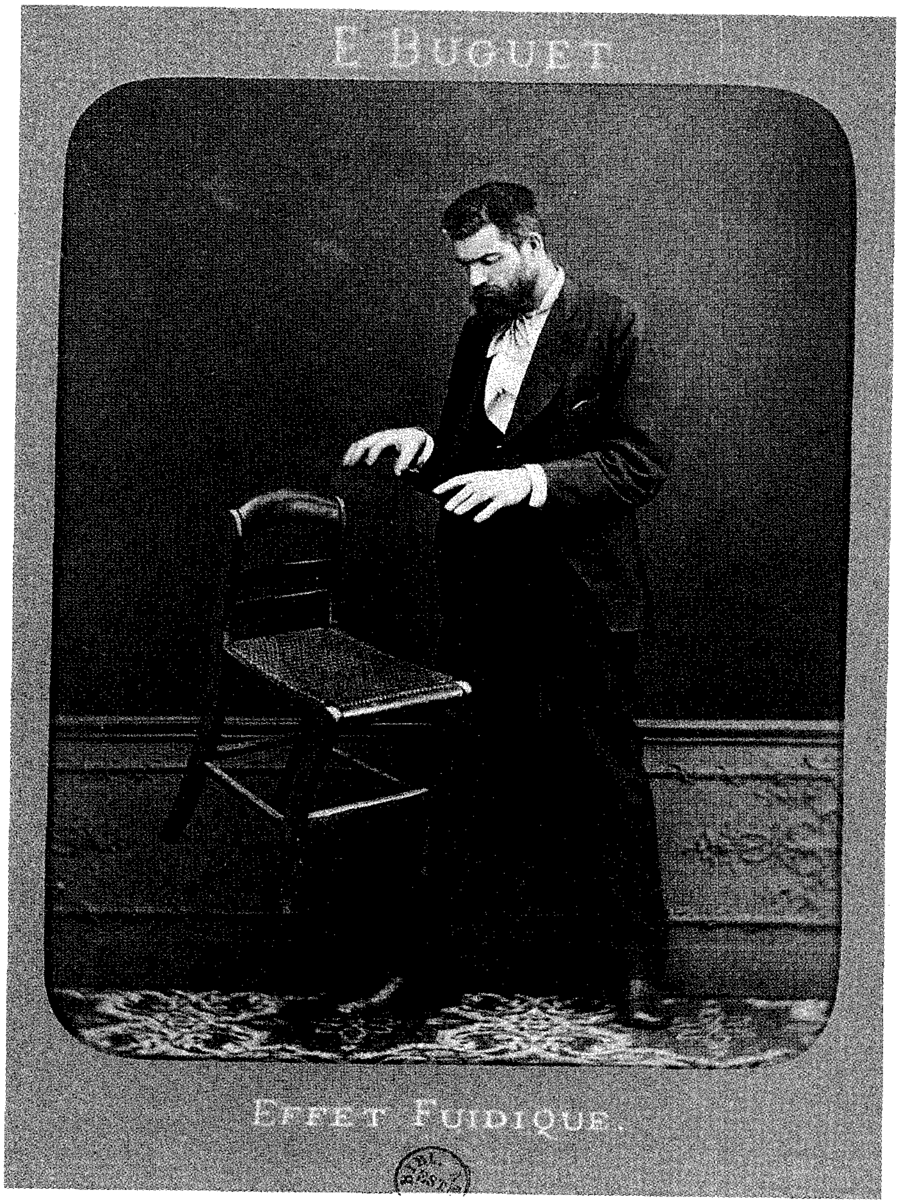
Spirit photography, which flourished between the late eighteen-sixties and the nineteen-thirties, was an exercise in blind faith and outrageous fraud. The Civil War in the United States and, a few years later, the Franco-Prussian War, in Europe, had decimated most of a generation, and photographers, responding to the desire of survivors to reconnect with the dead, found a way to bring them together on film. With the aid of some simple darkroom trickery, sitters for conventional studio portraits could be made to share the frame with the transparent figure, disembodied head, or smoky silhouette of a dead husband, wife, child, parent, or pet, and by the end of the nineteenth century thousands of these keepsakes had been printed in America and Europe. Spirit photographers, some of whom claimed to be able to capture not only the spirits of the dead but also the thoughts and dreams of the living, were exploiting more than the public's naïveté. As "The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult," an exhibition of more than a hundred and twenty photographs at the Metropolitan Museum, makes clear, within a few decades of the invention of photography its practitioners understood the camera's power as a tool not just for capturing reality but for manipulating it.

Skeptics, including members of the nascent Spiritualist movement, challenged spirit photographers' methods—most of which involved elementary forms of double exposure—and took them to court. Yet some photographers were compelled by a belief in the hereafter, and clients were so comforted by the images that they often refused to accept evidence of fakery, even when the photographer confessed to it. In the eighteen-seventies, Édouard Isidore Buguet, the first and most successful French spirit photographer, had a studio on the Boulevard Montmartre, where the business of traditional portraiture was supplemented with what one journalist called a "little industry turning out ghosts"—some fifty apparitions a month. Buguet's success attracted the attention of a policeman who, after sitting anonymously for a portrait, arrested him for fraud. Before his trial, in 1875, Buguet admitted to double-exposing his prints and conceded that he had no powers as a medium: "I am just a photographer with more or less skillful tricks." He was sentenced to a year in prison and fled to Belgium, but his clients considered him a martyr for the Spiritualist cause.

Visitors to the Met's show might wonder what the fuss was about, though they will be thoroughly entertained. The nine Buguet photographs mounted together in the exhibition's first gallery are obvious fakes, but so are the other images in the room. Many look like ordinary flea-market cabinet cards and *cartes de visite*—hand-sized portraits of stolid men and women in waistcoats and crinolines—except that ghostly figures float above the sitters' heads or hold them in a transparent embrace. Yet who could mistake these spectres—which included not just dead relatives but departed celebrities like Napoleon III and Balzac—for anything other than scrapbook cutouts trailing yards of chiffon? In the same gallery are five "anti-spirit" self-portraits, which Buguet made after his trial, satirizing his deceptive techniques and ridiculing his clients' beliefs. In one, he levitates a cane-bottomed chair. In another, he holds the hand of a wraithlike skeleton whose bearded face resembles his own. In the most elaborate image of the series, he sits at a table peering into an open book while a recumbent female apparition floats behind his head holding a medallion that states, "The chosen ghost is guaranteed. . . . Invisible manipulation carried out in front of the client." Buguet's spoofs, like other pointed satires included in the show, are more artful than the work they mock—animated by an evident delight in photography's possibilities for deceit.

After the turn of the century, the photographers who recorded Spiritualist phenomena were more likely to be Spiritualists themselves. Their work, gathered at the Met under the heading "Mediums," has an intimate quality that gives their increasingly audacious hoaxes an aura of authenticity. These photographers, both European and American, also claimed to be able to coax phantoms from the ether, but their primary subjects were the mediums, mostly women, who acted as go-betweens for the spirits. Most mediums preferred to demonstrate their powers by giving their psychic visitations a peculiarly physical form, and in many of these images the camera hovers in a cramped, darkened room inches from a woman's body as ectoplasm—the material manifestation of the spirit or the unconscious—spumes from her mouth, nose, or navel. (One Hungarian medium, whose scrapbook photographs show him vomiting ragged strips of spirit matter, later admitted that the material was cotton wool smeared with goose fat.) A Boston medium known as Margery, who looks like a young Eleanor Roosevelt, is depicted seated at a table as a fibrous mass emerges from her nose and, in a stereo view, an ectoplasmic "hand" (it looks like a shrivelled lettuce leaf) lies on the table before her. But Margery was most famous for being able to materialize a hand from her navel. In a photograph of the event, she appears naked from the waist down, with a small white cloth draped between her thighs just below the outstretched hand, which resembles a segmented, evenly toasted dinner roll. The result is pure Dali, as grotesque as it is erotic.

Removed from the context of nineteenth-century belief, much spirit photography looks like avant-garde experimentation, at once sinister, comic, lurid, and alarming. The claustrophobic interiors and tumbling furniture of the show's séance photographs recall the slapstick Surrealism of early silent films: "Fantômas," the French camp-noir serial, crossed with "Un Chien Andalou." The Italian Futurist Anton Giulio Bragaglia produced a series of occult photographs, and the French Surrealist André Breton referred in essays to paranormal experiments conducted by the German spirit photographer and writer Albert von Schrenck-Notzing. One of the exhibition's most astonishing images, taken in 1913, shows a medium's naked torso with a macramé-like web of ectoplasm suspended from her nipples. It wouldn't look out of place in a Man Ray retrospective. And no one would be surprised if Hans Bellmer or Pierre Molinier claimed the nightmarish closeup, circa 1920, and identified as "Birth of an Ectoplasm," which depicts a hairy knob of flesh held firmly in a medium's grasp.



An "anti-spirit" self-portrait by Édouard Isidore Buguet (1875).

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Today, photography is routinely subject to disbelief. Staged fictions masquerade as documents, and whole images are created with pixels. But photographers have always chafed at the limitations of reality. Stuck with the world in front of their camera—a room, a woman, a chair—the spirit photographers realized that if a figure, shrouded in white, were to enter the room briefly and then withdraw while the lens was still open, leaving a ghostly imprint on the film, dumb reality could be altered and the ordinary could be rendered extraordinary. Nearly all the photographers included in "The Perfect Medium" were accused of fakery; some eventually confessed to it. Schrenck-Notzing defended himself rather cleverly, pointing out that "a photograph reproduces *only* an *instant* abstracted from the flow of the living event as it occurred during the séances, and that, for this reason, the effect it produced could only be crude and deceptive." That's still a fairly accurate description of any photographic event. Photographs lie—they just can't help it. ♦

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THE THEATRE

DEATH BECOMES HER

Judith Light and Mia Farrow as dying mothers.

BY HILTON ALS

Read side by side, Ernest Becker's "The Denial of Death" and Elaine Scarry's "The Body in Pain" offer remarkably clear-eyed views into the nature of change and the way pain shapes the mind and soul of the sufferer. Each of these works suggests that living is not, or should not be, divorced from a certain awareness of the great wave of mortality that will eventually sweep us all out into the black sea of non-being. If you accept the unknowable—death—the peace that results can free you to know something of the suffering of others. In certain circles, this state is called enlightenment. In the contemporary American theatre, however, we prefer our entertainment to be free of the spiritual, easily commodified, and full of dialogue that even the great Thespis would fail to recognize as such. Thus we lose out on some of the most dramatic themes the world has to offer: death, suffering, and the transformative power of both.

Laura Wade's "Colder Than Here" (an MCC Theatre production, directed by Abigail Morris, at the Lucille Lortel) is dispiriting if you expect it to be anything more than what it is: a made-for-TV movie passing as theatre. One senses that Wade—a young English playwright, who tells the story of Myra (Judith Light), a homemaker whose efficiency and sense of purpose are diminished but not derailed by terminal cancer—has ambitions that go beyond mere entertainment. She seems to have set out to draw a credible portrait of a woman whose spiritual growth, as evidenced through her humor, allows her to attain a form of enlightenment. However, by sticking to structural and intellectual conventions—running through the predictable cycle of rage, acceptance, blah, blah, blah, all in one ninety-minute act—Wade sells out her characters for cheap laughs and cloying sentimentality. Where she could have been a brave playwright, she has settled for being a popular one.

This is more than a pity, given how much Judith Light brings to the role. Best known for playing the mother on the sitcom "Who's the Boss?," Light clearly wants to be an actress of range and skill, and this endears her to the audience. We are on her side in a flash, and more than a little annoyed at having to make our way through the muck of Myra's unsurprising backstory to get to her few solo moments onstage. The mother of two girls, Harriet and Jenna (Sarah Paulson and Lily Rabe), Myra is also married to the least interesting husband to hit the boards in recent years, Alec (played, for what it's worth, by the always wonderful Brian Murray). Alec, understandably, has shut down in the face of Myra's death: without his life partner, what will become of him? As Myra prepares for the end by making a to-do list—it's a PowerPoint presentation—he becomes more and more taciturn: he can feel his own life force leaving him. His daughters, on the other hand, eventually embrace the idea that their mother can soften the blow of her death by making them a part of it. They paint stars and clouds on her coffin; in the play's most effective scene, Jenna even accompanies Myra on a walk to the site where she'd like to be buried. The dialogue here carries strong echoes of Harold Pinter and Edward Albee, playwrights who, each in his own unsentimental way, have dealt with the subject of death. As Jenna and Myra arrive at the burial ground, in the West Midlands, we could just as easily be in Pinter's gray zone or in the upper-class world of Albee, where death is a silent bridge partner.

MYRA: Here.
JENNA: Here?
MYRA: Yes, I think so. Don't you think so?
JENNA: I'm not—I don't know.
MYRA: I think here is good. Flattest bit.

Under a tree—I like that, nice and shady. Let's say here.

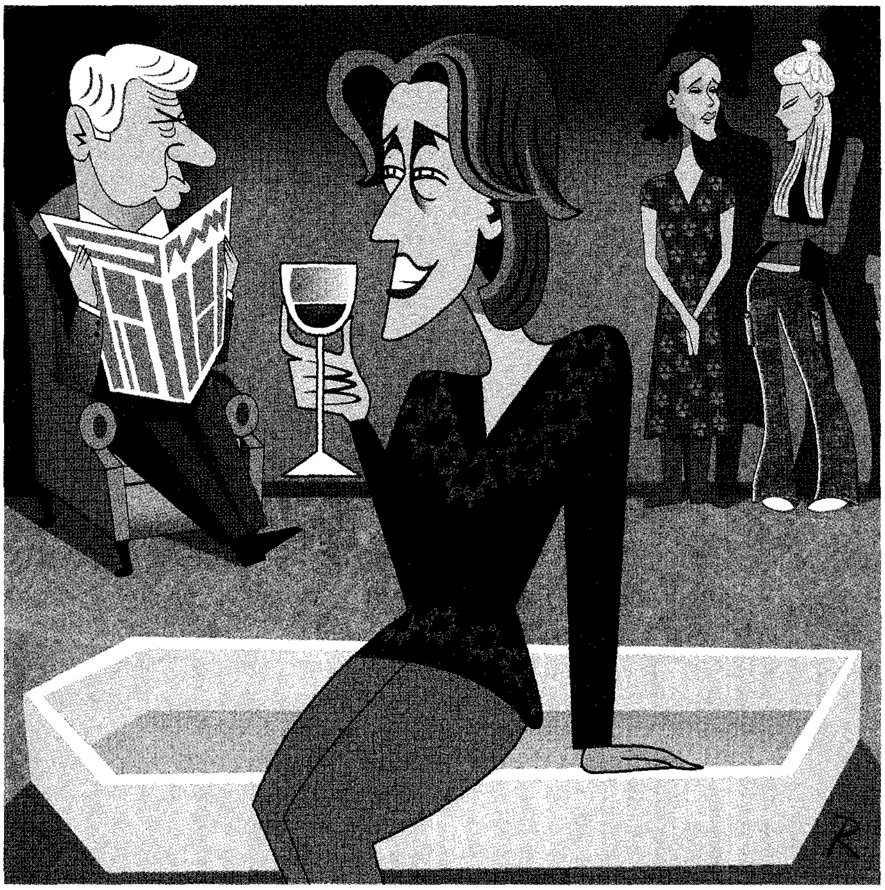
Aside from Light's performance, Paulson is the only meaningful thing "Colder Than Here" has to offer. With her moving and nuanced presence, she makes the script seem more credible than it is. It's always worth seeing Paulson perform. She never ignores her characters' deeper motives. She captures the darkness at the heart of any being. With time and luck, she may become her generation's Julie Harris, believing, as she must, that theatre can transcend its conventions to say more than most people want to hear about the nature of time and suffering and how they make humans of us all.

A number of writers in recent years—including Susan Sontag and Susan Minot, as well as Laura Wade—have built narratives around the thoughts and feelings that ailing women experience as they struggle with what Henry James reportedly called "the distinguished thing." Katherine Anne Porter's masterly 1929 short story "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" is a model of the form. Told from the point of view of an old woman on her deathbed, the story moves, like its heroine's mind, between two worlds: the present day, which is filled with the grievances that Granny levels against her doctor and her children, who are unable to accompany her to the territory she now occupies (the land of the dying), and the bitter past. When Granny was young, a man cheated her of love, just as death is now cheating her of life. In both cases, she has no control over the situation; death is, for her, the ultimate jilting.

Few have managed to follow gracefully in Porter's footsteps, largely because recounting a character's passing requires a degree of empathy and an understanding of the process of dying which is beyond those of us who cling to the fiction that death happens only to others. It's hard, then, to imagine what the playwright James Lapine thought he was up to with "Fran's Bed," which he also directed (at Playwrights Horizons), given the enormity of his subject and the meagreness of his literary talent. Lapine has various gifts—he's the Tony Award-winning writer and director behind "Into the Woods," "Falsettos," and "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," among other hits. But "Fran's Bed" lacks the humor and the stagecraft of his earlier productions. Its banality is not worth the critical ire it is likely to raise. Actually, it's difficult to remember the specific details that make the show so pointless; it unfolds before the viewer like a movie on a red-eye flight to nowhere.

One wonders why Mia Farrow—who plays the title role—bothered with the part. The explanation is, to some extent, obvious, given how little there is for older actresses to do onstage or onscreen these days. A more golden Vivien Leigh, Farrow plays a hysterical woman with a history of mental instability. She overdosed on barbiturates, and she may or may not have swallowed poison; in any case, she is now in a coma. Her two grown daughters, Vicky (the caustic Heather Burns) and Birdie (the unbelievably dull Julia Stiles), visit her in the hospital, as does her grumpy husband, Hank (Harris Yulin). Apparently, the only person who loves Fran unconditionally is her nurse, Dolly (Brenda Pressley), a "feisty" West Indian stereotype familiar to viewers of Lifetime TV. Sitting next to a dummy Fran in the bed, the real Fran, or her spirit or something, traipses through the story of her life, explaining to one shrink after another (stand-ins for God?) how she has tried to make her fractured family whole.

Despite Farrow's well-documented adoption of nine children, part of what has always made her an interesting film object is her narcissism: she wants us to love her, to ravish her with our eyes, while at the same time making us feel—with her perennially girlish voice—that our ravishment is a kind of rape. And yet she can't seem to make Fran visible to her husband or her children. This may have something to do with what Lapine is trying to prove: that all unhappy families are especially unhappy when grappling with the thought of losing someone they haven't loved well. Regrets? Hank and his children have had a few, but not enough to change much in their behavior, even as Fran slips away. At the play's close, Dolly coaxes Hank into helping to feed his immobile wife, in the hope of keeping her alive. I was hoping that Lapine and company would just let her go. ♦



Brian Murray, Judith Light, Sarah Paulson, and Lily Rabe in "Colder Than Here."

THE CURRENT CINEMA

GETTING THE STORY

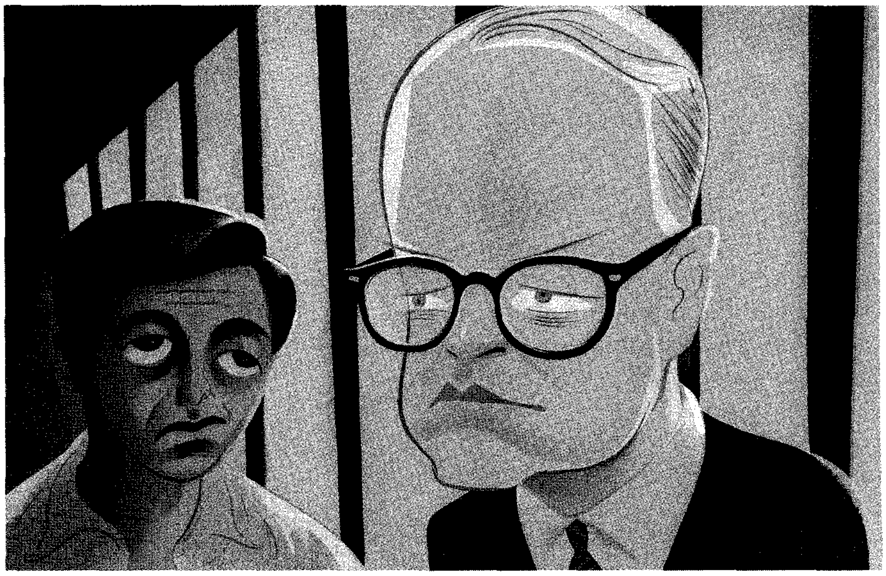
"Capote" and "Good Night, and Good Luck."

BY DAVID DENBY

On November 15, 1959, while luxuriating in abundant literary and social success in New York, the young Truman Capote was called to an unexpectedly spartan test. On that day, in Holcomb, Kansas, two ex-cons looking for money and thrills murdered four members of the Clutter family on their farm. A few weeks later, Capote, who had been eager to expand the boundaries of journalism, went to investigate the case for *The New Yorker*. Whatever his ambitions, Capote was an odd man for a police-blotter job. He was born in 1924 in New Orleans, and grew up in Alabama, Connecticut, and New York, where he went to the Trinity School for a while and worked briefly as an office boy at this magazine. For years, many readers (and, in particular, writers) have wondered how this habitué of Le Pavillon and La Côte Basque, with his high, thin, goose-quill voice and his floating palms, could possibly have gained the trust of the straightforward men and women of rural Kansas. In "Capote," which stars Philip Seymour Hoffman, the writer, Dan Futterman, and the director, Bennett Miller, satisfy that curiosity. "Capote," which draws extensively on Gerald Clarke's 1988 biography, is devoted almost entirely to the five years in which Capote lived and wrote "In Cold Blood," an assignment that became a four-part series, a best-selling book, and a literary classic. Small-scaled and limited, "Capote" is nevertheless the most intelligent, detailed, and absorbing film ever made about a writer's working method and character—in this case, a mixed quiver of strength, guile, malice, and mendacity.

Moviegoers who have followed Philip Seymour Hoffman's supporting work in such films as "The Talented Mr. Ripley" and "Cold Mountain" sensed that he had a lot more to give, and here it is. As the cinematographer, Adam Kimmel, moves in close, Hoffman's Capote looms up like some strange Rushmoric outcropping—heavy-domed skull, golden hair, pink skin, double-peaked upper lip, owlish glasses, and blue eyes that occasionally peer directly at the bruised ego and longings of the person in front of him. Hoffman starts with the physical and works inward to the soul. He's only a few years older than Capote was when he went to Kansas, but his thicker features seem to forecast the coarsening of face and body and the spreading spiritual rot that afflicted the writer in the years after the book came out. As Hoffman plays him, Capote is an actor, too: a wounded personality who remade himself; a public figure capable of facing down scorn. Holding forth at parties with cigarette and glass in hand, he dispenses rancorous gossip in a way that cuts off any possible life beyond his perfect sentences.

Although Capote, working hard, eventually befriended several people in Holcomb, his first foray there would have been a disaster were it not for his childhood pal Nelle Harper Lee (Catherine Keener), who was soon to publish "To Kill a Mockingbird," and who came along as his assistant. As Capote waltzes around the dour courthouses and landscapes in a sheepskin coat and an enormous Bergdorf's scarf, Lee makes the initial contacts and performs the introductions. Never taking a note, he boasts of near-total recall; he boasts, too, of the book he's going to write before he has written a word of it. He sobers up only when he sets eyes on one of the captured murderers, Perry Smith. (The movie almost dispenses with the other killer, Dick Hickock.) As Perry, Clifton Collins, Jr., is not as sensual and insinuating as Robert Blake, who crooned his way through the role in the frightening 1967 movie version of "In Cold Blood," but he's darkly handsome, with an abashed, yearning manner. Alone with Perry in his cell, Capote is stunned: this beautiful sociopath is *material*—a gold mine, in fact—and also a sympathetic human being whose miserable childhood and need for recognition match Capote's own history and ravenous hungers. "It's O.K. It's Truman. It's your friend," Hoffman says in his strangely incisive baby voice. In those early moments of interest and empathy, the masterpiece is born.



Clifton Collins, Jr., and Philip Seymour Hoffman in a movie about "In Cold Blood."

Perry warms to Capote's attentions, and the rest of the movie turns into a complicated struggle between the two of them, with a desperate Perry telling Capote enough of his story to try to motivate the writer to help him, and a devious Capote both kid-gloving and bullying Perry until he opens up and describes the night of the murders. Determined to create a new form—the "nonfiction novel"—Capote gets in deep with Perry. As the court appeals go on, staying the executions, their relations become an artistically necessary but morally questionable mixture of affection, fascination, and exploitation. But by 1965, Capote, exhausted from his bouts of research and writing, turns ruthless and antic; Hoffman swings back to party mode as Capote privately and publicly longs for the men to hang so that he can finish his manuscript.

Strictly speaking, this intense little movie is not an independent film: it was a dying major, United Artists, that entrusted a reported seven million dollars to the former high-school friends Dan Futterman, an actor, and Bennett Miller, who had directed only the documentary "The Cruise." But "Capote" is unimaginable without the independent-film movement of the past twenty years or so. Apart from some sweeping shots of an extremely horizontal Kansas (the movie was actually shot in Manitoba), the filmmakers work intimately, with an easy, unstressed understanding of such things as Capote's homosexuality and the fervent solicitude that his friends felt for him—solicitude mixed with jealousy, exasperation, and dismay. No doubt people will pick at inaccuracies in the portrait and say, "That's not Truman," but "Capote" is Truman enough—and an image likely to make any writer grimace in recognition. There are some oddities: Harper Lee's character is a little fuzzy, and the filmmakers turn William Shawn (Bob Balaban), the editor of *The New Yorker*, into an aggressive force who pushes the plot along. For the record, Shawn was not in the habit of demanding the bloody details in stories about murder, or of rushing off to the Midwest to keep his writers company at executions. Finally, the filmmakers' suggestion that Capote never recovered from the death of Perry Smith, or from the success of "In Cold Blood," strikes me as doubly sentimental. Capote was ultimately done in by alcohol. Yet, however one interprets it, the finale is acrid: the chronicler of death triumphs, and then has nowhere to go but to his own inglorious end.

At his best, the CBS news broadcaster Edward R. Murrow was swift, precise, grimly humorous, and effective. Murrow, who first came to prominence in the nineteen-thirties and became a star with his radio broadcasts from London during the Blitz, could go straight down the center of a subject without seeming banal. He was an insider who could imagine what it felt like to be an outsider. He could position himself as a witness to history while adhering to the forms of modesty. "Good Night, and Good Luck," George Clooney's account of Murrow's historic assaults on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, in 1954, imitates many of Murrow's best qualities. This is an elegant and stirring entertainment about the hard-drinking, hard-smoking reporters of "See It Now," the show that Murrow and the producer Fred Friendly put together every week—a group of men and women who marshalled their courage and their skills to overcome a noxious atmosphere of intimidation.

Clooney praises his hero without false illusions. Murrow, for all his journalistic virtues, was very canny about show business. As much as Humphrey Bogart or William Powell, he cultivated the stylized suavity of the thirties, and David Strathairn, another fine actor emerging from supporting roles, gets the streamlined Murrow look perfectly—the pomaded jet-black hair, the thick brows and the unblinking eyes, the cigarette smoke curling up into the frame. Clooney, who wrote the movie with the film's producer, Grant Heslov, drew heavily on Murrow's broadcast scripts, and Strathairn, tucking his chin, and angling his head slightly, delivers Murrow's curt, rhyming syntax with appropriate clipped diction and firm emphasis. Murrow's manner was stern, appraising; his seriousness was elevating, rewarding even, which was why many people were also embarrassed by what clearly humiliates Murrow in the movie—the interviews, in his other program, "Person to Person," with such celebrities as Liberace, whom he gamely quizzes on his marital plans.

The newsroom atmosphere, with its surges of bravado and caution, its teasing give-and-take, is entirely exhilarating, but the hand of commerce lingers over the giddy professional moments. "Good Night, and Good Luck" is a before-the-fall movie. In a couple of tense scenes, Clooney shows us that the chairman of CBS, William S. Paley (Frank Langella), after supporting Murrow for years, was ready to rein in his star to appease the sponsors. The issue, then as now, was how a commercial medium should address the public interest. There's little gravy in attacking Joe McCarthy in 2005, and that's only a small part of what Clooney is up to. His real intention appears to be to deliver a blow to the patella of a conglomerate-controlled press corps that, until recently, has indulged the Bush Administration's most extravagant smears and lies. He has completely succeeded. ♦

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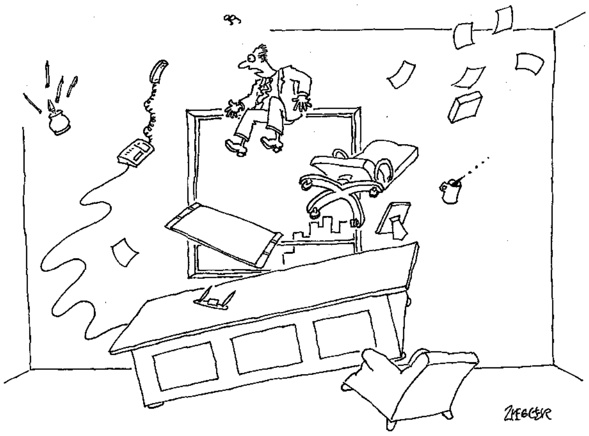
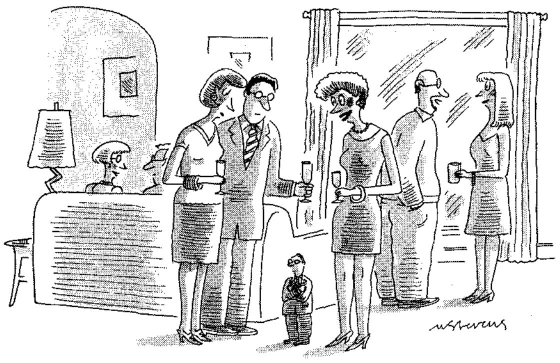
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Robert Mankoff, must be received by Sunday, October 9th. Finalists in the September 26th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the October 24th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"FEMA here. No, we haven't had any substantiated reports of earthquakes."
Neal Eckel, Tucson, Ariz.



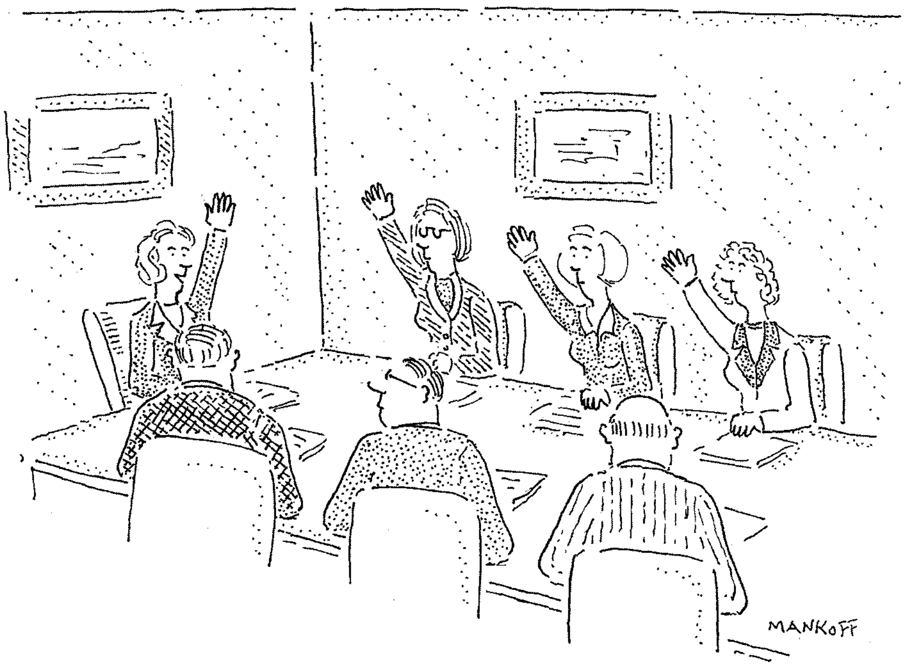
THE FINALISTS

"We met at the minibar."
Paul Cretien, Waco, Texas

"Larry can't tell you about his current project—it's top secret."
Linda Thelen, Fort Collins, Colo.

"Whatever you do, don't agree to play hide-and-seek with him."
Jeffrey Hutchins, Pittsburgh, Pa.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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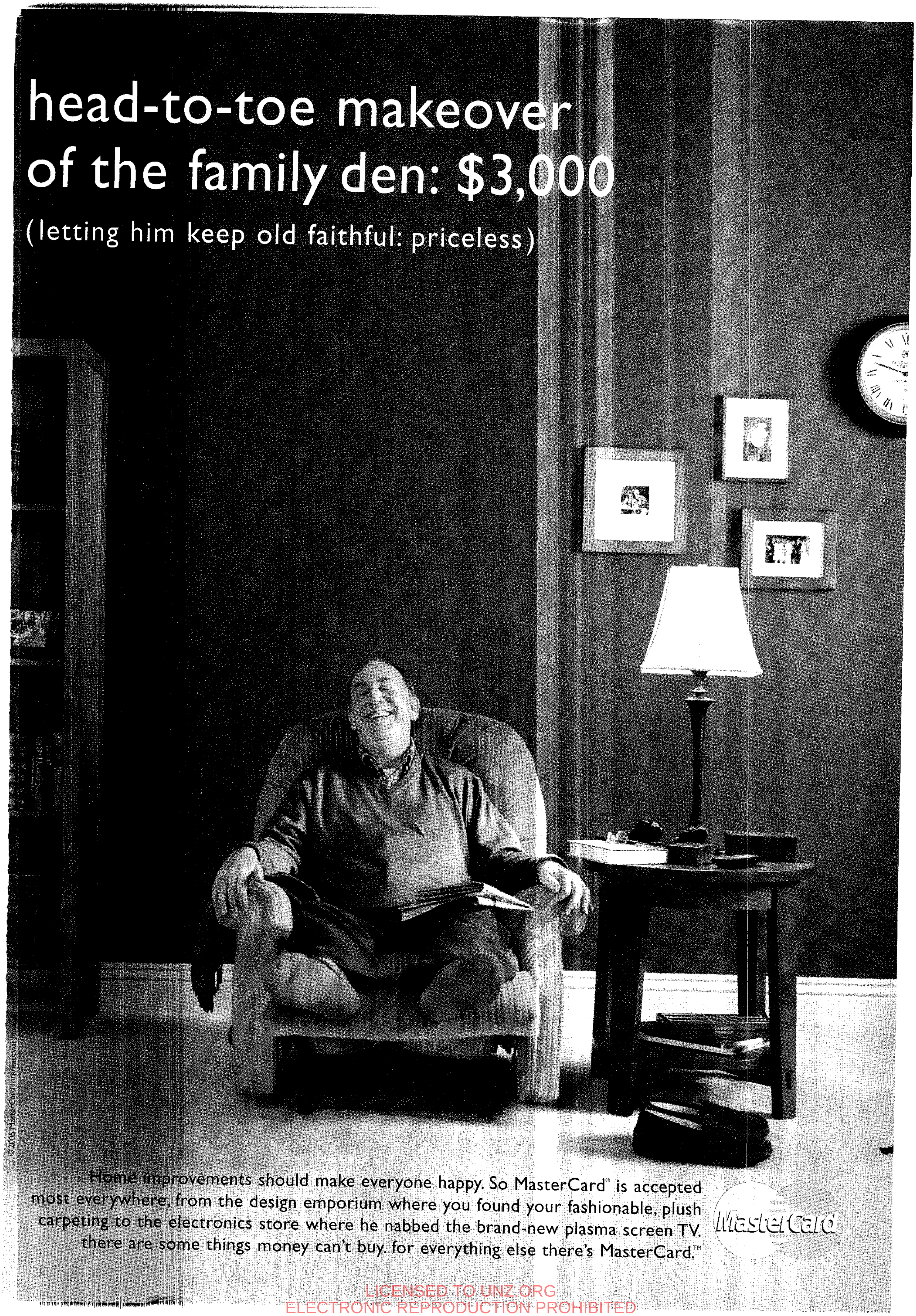
head-to-toe makeover of the family den: $3,000
(letting him keep old faithful: priceless)
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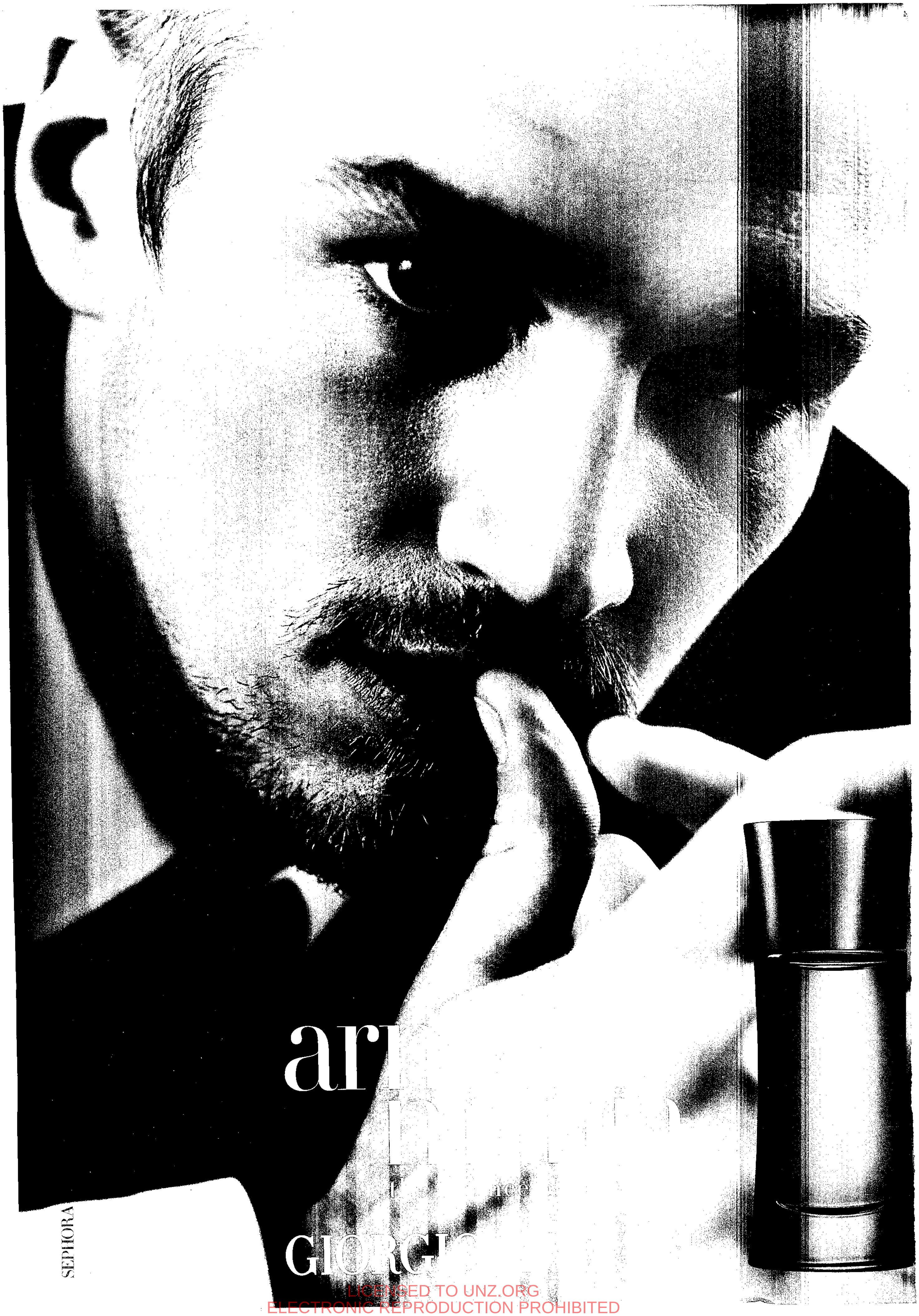
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